Samuel Beckett

Today / Aujourd'hui

Borderless Beckett
Beckett sans frontières

Tokyo 2006

Edited by / Édité par

Minako Okamuro, Naoya Mori, Bruno Clément,
Sjef Houppermans, Angela Moorjani & Anthony Uhlmann

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Noh actors Kanji Shimizu, Takao Nishimura, Minoru Shibata, Kengo Tanimoto in a performance inspired by Beckett's television plays, directed by Kenichi Kasai, Borderless Beckett symposium, Tokyo, 2006 Photograph by Futoshi Sakauchi

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INTRODUCTION

In 2006, Samuel Beckett's centenary was celebrated with symposia, conferences, and events all over the world, but in Japan, the year marked something more than Beckett's centenary: it was the fiftieth anniversary of the first encounter of the Japanese public with his work. Shin'ya Ando, a Japanese student from Waseda University, was among the lucky audience members who witnessed the world premiere of *En attendant Godot* at the Théâtre Babylone in Paris in 1953. Thoroughly enchanted by this "unprecedented" play, he translated *Godot* into Japanese upon his return to the Graduate School of Waseda University. Published by the Hakusuisha Publishing Company in 1956, Ando's translation introduced Beckett to a wider Japanese audience. Four years later, in 1960, Ando himself directed the Japanese premiere of *Godot* for the Bungakuza theatre company. That production launched the avant-garde Underground Theatre movement, which developed into the *Shougekijou-Undou* (Little-Theatre Movement), the new wave of Japanese theatre. *Godot* has been performed repeatedly in Japan since the 1960s, making a deep impression upon audience and performers alike, and Beckett's plays continue to exert a lasting influence on the contemporary Japanese theatre. Borderless Beckett: An International Samuel Beckett Symposium in Tokyo, 2006 thus fittingly celebrated both the Beckett centenary and the fiftieth anniversary of Japan's encounter with this most influential playwright.

The essays published in this volume are revised selections from the Symposium held at Waseda University from 29 September to 1 October, 2006, under the auspices of the 21st Century COE Institute for Theatre Research at Waseda and the Samuel Beckett Research Circle of Japan. Additional support from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (International Meeting Series) is gratefully acknowledged. With over sixty participants from around the globe, the Borderless Beckett symposium achieved an unqualified success as the first international Beckett symposium held in East Asia.

The late Takahashi Yasunari, who initiated Beckett studies in Japan, observed that Beckett shares affinities with classical Noh theatre. As Noh crosses borders between reality and dream, life and death, Beckett's art, too, transcends dualistic thinking and transgresses borders: conventional genre distinctions, linguistic differences between

English and French, geographical and political boundaries, and received frameworks of philosophy and aesthetics. Beckett's writing, which on the one hand reduces art to its bare essentials, is on the other paradoxically excessive, eluding any reductive view of literature, media, and culture. The "Borderless Beckett" issue aims to represent the free critical and creative atmosphere of the Symposium wherein diverse critical approaches and methodologies reached toward and celebrated Beckett's transgressive, borderless art.

The highlight of this volume is the contribution by Nobel Laureate J. M. Coetzee, the special guest of the Symposium. His article entitled "Eight Ways of Looking at Samuel Beckett" introduces a variety of novel approaches to Beckett, ranging from a comparative analysis of Beckett's work and Melville's *Moby Dick* to a biographical observation concerning Beckett's application for a lectureship at a South African university. Coetzee's argument is not linear but multiple. In his freewheeling presentation he elucidates the elaborate disjunctions between his different approaches for the enjoyment of his audience, and each image of Beckett that Coetzee presents is vivid and exploratory.

We have arranged the essays into nine categories to reflect the richness and diversity of the Symposium. The illuminating and innovative contributions by the keynote speakers and plenary panelists are featured in several of these sections: in "Dislocations: Limits and Limitlessness," Steven Connor's " 'On such and such a day ... in such a world': Beckett's Radical Finitude," and Evelyne Grossman's "À La Limite …" are followed by an essay on the Japanese spatial concept of *ma* and another on ways and borders in *Watt*; Bruno Clément's "Mais quelle est cette voix?" in "Littérature et philosophie: voix et images en question" precedes a number of insightful investigations of the image in Beckett; Augustine's memory; speakers and listeners; and Bergsonian vitalism; Mary Bryden's "Beckett, Böll, and Clowns," Enoch Brater's, "From Dada to Didi: Beckett and the Art of His Century," and Angela Moorjani's "Genesis, Child's Play, and the Gaze of Silence: Samuel Beckett and Paul Klee" fill the section entitled "Of Clowns and Artists"; and finally, in the section on "Borderlessness: Life and Death / Beginnings and Endings," S. E. Gontarski's "An End to Endings: Samuel Beckett's End Game(s)" is joined by essays reflecting on death and loss, playfully or not. The keynote speakers and plenary panelists have been mainstays of Beckett studies, yet as is apparent from their essays, they continue to break fresh ground with bracing new approaches to Beckett's writing.

The Symposium was animated by seventeen diverse sessions organized under the following categories: "Body," "Image/Vision," "Nature," "Politics," "Presence/Absence," "Translation." "Philosophy," "Philosophie," "Later Plays/TV," "Aporie," "Comparative," "Japanese Theatre," "Deleuze," "Dramaturgie," "Alterity," "Voix/Silence," and "Early Works/ Modern Art." Each of the sessions offered pioneering papers and lively discussions. The selection of essays based on these papers renew our awareness of the admirable quality and wide range of approaches that characterize Beckett studies. The variety of investigations is apparent from our nine section titles into which the essays have been grouped, which in addition to the four mentioned earlier, include "Animals, Humans, Stones," with essays drawing in innovative ways on Leibniz, eighteenth-century thinkers, and contemporary thought on animality; an especially large number of intriguing studies of "Television's 'Savage Eye': Phantasmagorical and Virtual Bodies"; stimulating articles on punning and naming in "Beckett's Borderless Words / Paroles sans frontières"; strong readings informed by Agamben, Coetzee, and recent Irish social controversies in the "Witnessing" section; and the insightful essays in " 'Sssh': Sounds and Signs of Silence" examining Beckett's mimes and the porous border between words and silence. With perspectives ranging from that of medical technology to a focus on animal figures, the varied approaches of Beckett studies open up new dimensions and unearth new knowledge.

One of the important aims of "Borderless Beckett" was to encourage the younger generation of Beckett scholars. One of the plenary panels "Dialogue entre Bruno Clément et de jeunes chercheurs" offered two younger scholars the opportunity to discuss Beckett informally with Clément. This volume includes a number of the articles by young promising Beckettians who brought a touch of excitement to the Symposium; their arguments are at once innovative yet informed by the fifty-year history of the field. Building on the critical legacy of Beckett scholarship, they signal at the same time that Beckett studies have entered a new phase.

The closing ceremony of the Symposium featured the "Tribute to Beckett," a performance of Noh players inspired by Beckett's television works. Four performers walking around a limited space in the Noh style illustrated the potential link between Beckett, Yeats, and Noh drama. The dramatic and noble presence of the Noh performers ideally marked the conclusion of the three exciting, stimulating, and fruitful days of the Symposium. We are particularly pleased to include in this volume pho-

tographs of the performance by Futoshi Sakauchi, one of the contributors from Japan and a Dublin-based stage photographer, and photographs of Tokyo taken by Sjef Houppermans, who needs no introduction to readers of *SBT/A*.

In conclusion, we would like to thank the participants in the Symposium and the contributors to this volume for their stimulating presentations and contributions. We also wish to extend our appreciation to the organizing committee members of the Borderless Beckett Symposium: Masaki Kondo, Yoshiyuki Inoue, Michiko Tsushima, Mariko Hori Tanaka, Manako Ono, Izumi Nishimura, Kaku Nagashima, Michael Guest, and especially Takeshi Kawashima, Yoshiki Tajiri, and a postgraduate Beckettian Noboru Kataoka. Without their support, assistance, and encouragement, this volume would not have been realized.

EIGHT WAYS OF LOOKING
AT SAMUEL BECKETT

J. M. Coetzee

Beckett Symposium: Tokyo, September 2006

One.
In his writings, Samuel Beckett is a philosophical dualist. Specifically, he writes as if he believes that we are made up of, that we are, a body plus a mind. Even more specifically, he seems to believe that the connection between mind and body is mysterious, or at least unexplained. At the same time he – that is to say, his mind – finds the dualistic account of the self ludicrous. This split attitude is the source of much of his comedy.

In the standard account, Beckett believes that our constitution is dual, and that our dual constitution is the *fons et origo* of our unease in the world. He also believes there is nothing we can do to change our constitution, least of all by philosophical introspection. This plight renders us absurd.

But what is it exactly that is absurd: the fact that we are two different kinds of entity, body and mind, linked together; or the belief that we are two different kinds of entity linked together? What is it that gives rise to Beckett's laughter and Beckett's tears, which are sometimes hard to tell apart: the human condition, or philosophical dualism as an account of the human condition?

Beckett the philosophical satirist attacks and destroys the dualist account again and again. Each time the dualist account resurrects itself and re-confronts him. Why does he find it so hard to walk away from the struggle? Why does he persist in his split attitude toward the split self of dualism? Why does he not take refuge in its most appealing alternative, philosophical monism?

Two.
I presume that the answer to the last question, why Beckett is not a monist, is that he is too deeply convinced he is a body plus a mind. I presume that, however much he might like to find relief in monism, his everyday experience is that he is a being that thinks, linked somehow to an insentient carcass that it must carry around with it and be carried around in; and that this experience is not only an everyday, once-a-day experience but an experience experienced at every waking instant of every day. In other words, the unremitting undertone of consciousness is consciousness of non-physical being.

So monism does not offer Beckett salvation because monism is not true. Beckett cannot believe the monist story and cannot make himself believe the monist story. He cannot make himself believe the monist story not because he cannot tell himself a lie but because at the moment when the dualist story is abandoned and the monist story is inhabited instead, the monist story becomes the content of a disembodied dualist consciousness.

An alternative and more effective way of answering the question of why Beckett is not a monist is simply to look at propaganda for a monist theory of mind. Here is William James in confident mood, expounding the advantages of having a soul that is at home in the world:

> The great fault of the older rational psychology was to set up the soul as an absolute spiritual being with certain faculties of its own by which the several activities of remembering, imagining, reasoning, and willing etc. were explained […]. But the richer insight of modern days perceives that our inner faculties are adapted in advance to the features of the world in which we dwell, adapted, I mean, so as to secure our safety and prosperity in its midst.
>
> (*Psychology* [*Briefer Course*])

Three.
There have been plenty of people who have themselves experienced Beckett's plight, which can be roughly expressed as the plight of existential homelessness, and have felt it to be a tragic plight or an absurd plight or a plight both tragic and absurd at the same time. In the latter half of the nineteenth century there were many people who, *pace* Wil-

liam James, suspected either that the high civilization of the West had taken an evolutionary turn that was leading it to a dead end, or that the future belonged not to the reflective, hyperconscious, alienated 'modern' type of human being but to the unreflective, active type, or both. Cultural pessimism of this kind was still very much alive as Beckett grew up. Fascism, whose apogee he was fated to live through and suffer under, glorified the instinctive, unreflective, active type and stamped its heel on sickly, reflective types like him.

What had arrived to concentrate the minds of Zola and Hardy and Huysmans and people like them was the theory of biological evolution, which by the end of the century had been taken in and absorbed by most people who liked to think of themselves as modern. There was a continuum of life forms that linked bacteria at the one end to homo sapiens at the other. But there were also phyla that terminated, became extinct, because over-adapted. Could it be that the huge brain of homo sapiens, developed to bear the weight of so much consciousness, was an overadaptation, that mankind was doomed to go the way of the dinosaurs, or if not mankind in toto then at least the hyperreflective Western bourgeois male?

Four.
What is missing from Beckett's account of life? Many things, of which the biggest is the whale.

"Captain Ahab, I have heard of Moby Dick," says Starbuck, the mate of the Pequod. "Was [it] not Moby Dick that took off thy leg?"

"Aye, Starbuck," says Captain Ahab, "it was Moby Dick that dismasted me." For that "I'll chase […] that white whale […] over all sides of earth, till he spouts black blood and rolls fin out."

But Starbuck is dubious. I joined this ship to hunt whales, he says, not to pursue vengeance – "vengeance on a dumb brute […] that simply smote thee from blindest instinct. To be enraged with a dumb thing, Captain Ahab, seems blasphemous."

Ahab is unswayed. "All visible objects […] are but as pasteboard masks," he says, offering a philosophical account of his vendetta against the white whale. "But in each event – in the living act, the un-

doubted deed – there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me" (*Moby Dick*, ch. 36).

Are our lives directed by an intelligence, malign or benign; or on the contrary is what we go through just stuff happening? Are we part of an experiment on so grand a scale that we cannot descry even its outlines, or on the contrary is there no scheme at all of which we form a part? This is the question I presume to lie at the heart of *Moby Dick* as a philosophical drama, and it is not dissimilar to the question at the heart of Beckett's oeuvre.

Melville presents the question not in abstract form but in images, in representations. He can do it no other way, since the question offers itself to him in a singular image, the image of blankness, of no-image. Whiteness, says Ishmael the narrator, in a chapter entitled "The Whiteness of the Whale," is "the intensifying agent in things the most appalling to mankind"; his mind throws up a picture of an all-white landscape of snow, of "dumb blankness, full of meaning" (ch. 42).

The question offers itself in images. Through images, even blank images, stream torrents of meaning (that is the nature of images). One image: the white wall of the cell in which we find ourselves imprisoned, which is also the white wall constituted by the huge forehead of the whale. If the harpoon is cast, if the harpoon tears through the wall, into what does it tear?

Another image: the whale, huge in its rage, huge in its death-agony. In the world of 1859, the white whale is the last creature on earth (on God's earth? perhaps, perhaps not) whom man, even man armed for battle, goes forth to confront with fear in his heart.

A whale is a whale is a whale. A whale is not an idea. A white whale is not a white wall. If you prick a whale, does he not bleed? Indeed he does, and by the barrelful, as we read in chapter 61. His blood cannot be escaped. His blood bubbles and seethes for furlongs behind him, till the rays of the sun, reflected from it, redden the faces of his killers. It

turns the sea into a crimson pond; it doth the multitudinous seas incarnadine.

In their white cells, Beckett's selves, his intelligences, his creatures, whatever one prefers to call them, wait and watch and observe and notate.

> All white in the whiteness the rotunda […]. Diameter three feet, three feet from ground to summit […]. Lying on the ground two white bodies […]. White too the vault and the round wall […] all white in the whiteness […].
>
> (*Imagination Dead Imagine*)

> All known all white bare white body fixed one yard legs joined like sewn. Light heat white floor one square yard never seen. White walls one yard by two white ceiling […].
>
> (*Ping*)

Why do these creatures not grasp their harpoon and hurl it through the white wall? Answer: Because they are impotent, invalid, crippled, bedridden. Because they are brains imprisoned in pots without arms or legs. Because they are worms. Because they do not have harpoons, only pencils at most. Why are they cripples or invalids or worms or disembodied brains armed at most with pencils? Because they and the intelligence behind them believe that the only tool that can pierce the white wall is the tool of pure thought. Despite the evidence of their eyes that the tool of pure thought fails again and again and again. You must go on. I can't go on. Go on. Try again. Fail again.

To Melville the one-legged man who trusts himself to the harpoon-thrust, though the harpoon fails him too (to the harpoon is knotted the rope that drags him to his death), is a figure of tragic folly and (maybe) tragic grandeur, *à la* Macbeth. To Beckett, the legless scribbler who believes in pure thought is a figure of comedy, or at least of that brand of anguished, teeth-gnashing, solipsistic intellectual comedy, with intimations of damnation behind it, that Beckett made his own, and that even became a bit of a reflex with him until the late dawning he underwent in the 1980s.

But what if Beckett had had the imaginative courage to dream up the whale, the great flat white featureless front (front, from Latin *frons*, forehead) pressed up against the fragile bark in which you venture upon the deep; and behind that front, the great, scheming animal brain, the brain that comes from another universe of discourse, thinking thoughts according to its own nature, beyond malign, beyond benign, thoughts inconceivable, incommensurate with human thought?

Five.
Try again.

A being, a creature, a consciousness wakes (call it that) into a situation which is ineluctable and inexplicable. He (she? it?) tries his (her? its?) best to understand this situation (call it that) but never succeeds. In fact, the very notion of understanding a situation becomes more and more opaque. He/she/it seems to be a part of something purposive, but what is that something, what is his/her/its part in it, what is it that calls the something purposive?

We make a leap. Leave it to some other occasion to reflect on what this leap consisted in.

A being, a creature, one of those creatures we, whoever we are, call an ape (what his/her/its name for himself/herself/itself we do not know; we are not even sure that he/she/it has the concept of a name; call him/her/it 'It' henceforth; we may even need to question the concept of having a concept before we are finished) – It finds itself in a white space, in a situation. It seems to be part of something purposive; but what?

Before its eyes are three black plastic tubes a metre long and nineteen millimetres in diameter. Below each of the tubes is a small wooden box with an open top and a door that is closed but can be opened.

A nut is dropped (we pause to note this "is dropped," which seems to have no subject, no agent – how can that be? – before we go on) into the third tube (one-two-three: can we assume the concept of counting, can we assume rightmost and leftmost?). If the being, the creature, the ape, It, wants the nut (always, in these stories of bizarre situations to which you awake, it comes down to something edible), It must open the

correct box, where the correct box is defined as the box containing the nut.

The nut is dropped into the third tube. It chooses a box to open. It opens the third box, and lo and behold, there is the nut. Greedily It eats the nut (what else is there to do with it, and besides, It is starving).

Again the nut is dropped into the third tube. Again It opens the third box. Again the box contains a nut.

The nut is dropped into the second tube. Has It been lulled by habit into thinking the third box is always the lucky box, the full box? No: It opens the second box, the box directly beneath the second tube. There is a nut in it.

The nut is dropped into the first tube. It opens the first box. The nut is in it.

So tube one leads to box one, tube two to box two, tube three to box three. All is well so far. This may be an absurdly complicated way of feeding a being, an appetite, a subject, but such appears to be the way things work in the present universe, the white universe in which It finds itself. If you want a nut, you must take care to watch into which tube it is dropped, and then open the box below.

But ah! the universe is not so simple after all. The universe is not as it may appear to be. In fact – and this is the key point, the philosophical lesson – the universe is never as it appears to be.

A screen is introduced: It can still see the top ends of the tubes, and the bottom ends, but not the middles. Some shuffling takes place. The shuffling comes to an end, and everything is at it was before, or at least seems to be as it was before.

A nut is dropped into the third tube. It, the creature, opens the third box. The third box is empty.

Again a nut is dropped into the third tube. Again It opens the third box. Again it is empty.

Within It, within Its mind or Its intelligence or perhaps even just Its brain, something is set in motion that will take many pages, many volumes to unravel, something that may involve hunger or despair or boredom or all of these, to say nothing of the deductive and inductive faculties. Instead of these pages and volumes, let us just say there is a hiatus.

It, the creature opens, the second box. It contains a nut. It makes no sense that it should be there, but there it is: a nut, a real nut. It eats the nut. That's better.

A nut is dropped into the third tube. It opens the third box. It is empty. It opens the second box. It contains a nut. Aha!

A nut is dropped into the third tube. It opens the second box. It contains a nut. It eats the nut.

So: the universe is not as it was before. The universe has changed. Not tube three and box three but tube three and box two.

(You think this is not life, someone says? You think this is merely some thought-experiment? There are creatures to whom this is not just life but the *whole* of life. This white space is what they were born into. It is what their parents were born into. It is what their grandparents were born into. It is all they know. This is the niche in the universe in which they are evolved to fit. In some cases, this is the niche in which they have been genetically modified to fit. These are *laboratory animals*, says this someone, by which is meant animals who know no life outside the white laboratory, animals incapable of living outside the laboratory, animals to whom the laboratory, while it may look to us like white hell, is the only world they know. End of interjection. Go on.)

Again there is an episode of something being shuffled behind the screen, which It is not allowed to watch.

A nut is dropped into the third tube. It, the creature, opens the second box. It is empty. It opens the third box. It is empty. It opens the first box. It contains a nut. It eats the nut.

So: no longer three and three, no longer three and two, but three and one.

Again, shuffling.

A nut is dropped into the third tube. The creature opens the first box. It is empty.

So: after each shuffling, everything changes. That seems to be the rule. Three and three, then shuffling, then three and two, then shuffling, then three and one, then shuffling, then three and – what?

It, the creature, is doing its best to understand how the universe works, the universe of nuts and how you lay your hands (your paws) on them. That is what is going on, before our eyes.

But is that truly what is going on?

Six.
Something opens and then almost immediately closes again. In that split second a revelation takes place. It is trying to be understood (language creaks under the strain) how the universe works, what the laws are.

Someone is dropping nuts into tubes, and doing so not idly (not like a bored god) but with a goal in mind: to understand how my mind works, and more specifically to understand the limits of my mind. Can I link one with one, two with two, three with three? If I can, can I link three with two, two with one, one with three? If I can, how long before I can learn instead to link three with two, two with two, one with two? And how long thereafter before the penny drops and I link each episode of invisible shuffling of tubes with a revolution in the laws by which the universe works?

This is not a meaningless universe, that is, it is not a universe without rules. But getting to understand the rules of the universe counts for nothing, in the end. The universe is interested not in what you can understand but at what point you cease to understand. Three with three and two with two and one with two, for instance: will you be able to understand *that*?

Let us call him God or Godot, the little God. How much can this God, with his nuts and tubes and boxes, find out about me, and what if anything will be left that he cannot know? The answer to the first question may not be knowable, though it does seem to depend on how tireless his interest in me may be, on whether he may not have better things to do with his time. The answer to the second question is clearer: he can never know what it is to be me.

God thinks I spend my time waiting for him to arrive with his apparatus for testing my limits. In a sense he is right: I am in the cage in which, as far as I know, I was born. I cannot leave, there is nothing for me to do but wait. But I am not seriously waiting for God. Rather I am occupying time while I wait for him. What God does not understand is this "not seriously" with which I wait for him, this "not seriously" which looks like a mere adverbial, like 'patiently' or 'idly' – I am patiently waiting for God, I am idly waiting for God – not a major part of the sentence, not the subject or the predicate, just something that has casually attached itself to the sentence, like fluff.

God believes I am a body and a mind, miraculously conjoined. With my body I eat the nut. Something happens, and the nut, either the idea of the nut or the fact of the nut in the stomach, triggers a thought: *Nut good. More nut. Understand one-two-three, get more nut*. It amuses God to think that is what happens, to think that the miracle (that is to say the trick) of conjunction allows him to use a nut get the mind to work. God reflects in passing that conjoining a body with a mind was one of his more inspired ideas, his more inspired and funniest. But God is the only one who finds it funny. The creature, It, I, the laboratory animal, does not find it funny, except in a grim Beckettian way, because the creature, It, I, does not know it is a body and a mind conjoined. *I think, therefore I am*: that is not what It thinks. On the contrary, it thinks, *I am! I am! I am!*

Go on.

Seven.
In the year 1937 the University of Cape Town in South Africa advertised a vacancy for a lecturer in Italian. Applicants should hold at least an honours degree in Italian, said the advertisement. The successful

candidate would spend most of his time teaching Italian for beginners. Perks would include six months of sabbatical leave every three years, and a contribution toward the expense of travel, by ocean liner, to and from the old country.

The advertisement appeared in the *Times Literary Supplement*, where it was seen by T. B. Rudmose-Brown, Professor of Romance Languages at Trinity College Dublin. Rudmose-Brown promptly contacted one of the better students to have graduated from his department and suggested that he apply.

The student in question, S. B. Beckett, by then thirty-one years old, followed Rudmose-Brown's suggestion and sent in an application. Whether the application was seriously intended we do not know. We know that at the time S. B. Beckett had ambitions to be a writer, not a language teacher. On the other hand, what writing he did brought in no money; he was living off handouts from his brother. So it is not inconceivable that penury might have forced his hand. It is not inconceivable that, if offered the job, he might have knuckled down and made the journey to the southernmost tip of Africa, there to instruct the daughters of the merchant class in the rudiments of the Tuscan tongue and, in his spare time, loll on the beaches. And who is to say that among those daughters there might not have been some sweet-breathed, bronze-limbed Calypso capable of seducing an indolent Irish castaway who found it hard to say no into the colonial version of wedded bliss? And if, furthermore, the passage of the years had found the erstwhile lecturer in Italian language advanced to a professorship in Italian, perhaps even a professorship in Romance Languages (why not? – he was, after all, the author of a little book on Proust), what reason would he have had to abandon his insular paradise and set sail again for Ithaca?

The laconic letter of application S. B. Beckett wrote in 1937 has survived in the University of Cape Town archives, together with the letter Rudmose-Brown addressed to the selection committee in support of his candidacy, and an attested copy of the testimonial he had written when Beckett graduated from Trinity College in 1932. In his letter Beckett names three referees: a doctor, a lawyer and a clergyman. He lists three publications: his book on Proust, his collection of stories (which he cites as *Short Stories* rather than by its proper title, *More Pricks than Kicks*), and a volume of poems.

Rudmose-Brown's testimonial could not be more enthusiastic. He calls Beckett the best student of his year in both French and Italian. "He speaks and writes like a Frenchman of the highest education," he says. "As well as possessing a sound academic knowledge of the Italian, French and German languages, he has remarkable creative faculty." In a P.S., he notes that Beckett also has "an adequate knowledge of Provençal, ancient and modern."

One of Rudmose-Brown's colleagues at Trinity College, R. W. Tate, adds his support. "Very few foreigners have a practical knowledge of [Italian] as sound as [Beckett's], or as great a mastery of its grammar and constructions."

Regrettably, the dice did not fall in Beckett's favour. The lectureship went to a rival whose research interest was the dialect of Sardinia.

Eight.
Why does the title "Franz Kafka, PhD, Professor of Creative Writing, Charles University, Prague" raise a smile to our lips, when the title "Saul Bellow, BA, Professor of Social Thought, University of Chicago" does not?

Because Kafka does not fit, we say. True, artists do not easily fit or fit in, and, when they are fitted in, fit uncomfortably. (Such a short word, 'fit,' three letters, one syllable, yet with such unexpected reaches.) But Kafka, we feel, exhibits misfit of a higher order than other artists. Kafka is the misfit artist himself, the angel Misfit. He would fit no better behind a lectern than behind the counter of a butcher shop, or punching tickets on a tram. And what would Professor Kafka teach, anyway? How not to fit in? How to make a living as a specialist in not fitting in, as one can make a living as a specialist in not eating?

Yet the fact is that Kafka was a perfectly competent insurance adjuster, respected by his colleagues at the Workmen's Accident Insurance Company, 7 Pořič St, Prague, where he was employed for many years. Do we perhaps underestimate Kafka – underestimate his competence, his versatility, his ability to fit it? Are we misled, perhaps, by the famous photographs of the man, with the brilliant, dark eyes that seem to

bespeak piercing insight into realms invisible and to hint that their owner does not belong in this world, not wholly?

What of Beckett? Should we smile at the thought of Samuel Barclay Beckett, BA, MA, Professor of Romance Languages, University of Cape Town?

It helps to be lean, and Beckett was as lean as Kafka. It helps to have a piercing gaze, and Beckett had his own variety of piercing gaze. Like photographs of Kafka, photographs of Beckett show a man whose inner being shines like a cold star through the fleshly envelope. But soul can shine through flesh only if soul and flesh are one. If soul and flesh belong to distinct realms, and their conjunction is an everlasting mystery, then no photograph will ever tell the truth.

DISLOCATIONS: LIMITS AND LIMITLESSNESS

"ON SUCH AND SUCH A DAY …
IN SUCH A WORLD":
Beckett's Radical Finitude

Steven Connor

Beckett has been made the centrepiece of what might be called a contemporary aesthetics of the inexhaustible, which assumes the sovereign value of endless propagation and maintains a horror of any kind of limit. Having perhaps helped in some of my previous work to recruit Beckett to this aesthetic, I argue in this paper that Beckett is in fact a writer who is governed by the principles of limit and finitude, principles that are in fact both philosophically more provocative and politically more responsible than the cult of endless exceeding that has attached itself to Beckett.

> They told me I was everything.'Tis a lie.
> *King Lear*

Modern philosophy has become at once violently allergic and pathologically addicted to the question of limits in general and its own limits in particular. One might say that the exercise of modern philosophy, like the conduct of modern scientific enquiry, has been preeminently the overcoming of limits – limits of ignorance, confusion, incapacity. Since Nietzsche, philosophy has been a matter of strenuous exceeding and overgoing. In contemporary philosophy, nothing succeeds like excess. The only way to do philosophy, especially if, as some, in apocalyptic mood, have wondered, philosophy may be near to being over, is to overdo it.

A philosophy of limit never quite arrives: it always becomes a melancholy or invigorating account of the limits of philosophy, which provokes the desire to exceed those limits, or to engineer an asymptotic approach to the absolute limit – so that the concept of limit comes to encode an immoderate urge to go to the edge, of the known, the possible, the thinkable. This idea is implicit in the very word 'limit,' which

derives from Latin *limen*, 'threshold,' which implies that to go to the edge may always promise the possibility of going beyond – otherwise how would one know it was the edge? And yet, the 'liminology,' the fact that, as David Wood has said, "philosophy has an essential relation to the question of limits, and its own limits" (xv), includes the queasy awareness that the desire of triumphantly overcoming limits is itself a cramping ambition, one that must therefore in its turn be overcome (undercome, one might impossibly have to say).

Two Finitudes

What is meant by finitude? Finitude first names that which is destined to end, rather than to endure – or rather it names the attempt to accommodate oneself to that necessity. The principal and overwhelming form of finitude for Heidegger, from which many philosophical considerations of finitude take their point of departure, is the condition of *zum Tode sein* or 'being-towards-death' that is a distinguishing feature of *Dasein* and imparts its tension and tincture to the whole of life.

There are subsidiary forms of finitude, or being-towards-ending. As is well-known, or at least unignorable, which is not quite the same thing, Beckett is drawn to the endingness of things in general. Where an ordinary reader might wonder 'what happens next?', Beckett always defaults to the question 'what happens last?' or 'how will the last thing of all happen?' It is in this sense that Beckett is a secular, or vernacular, eschatologist inclined always to the *eschaton*.

The finitude of mortality seems like an arbitrary, incomprehensible violence to the cheerful ego that means to live forever and goes on living as though it thinks it will. But the finitude of death also offers an abatement of empty time, the possibility of the sense of an ending in a world in which nothing otherwise can ever finish becoming. The one kind of finitude presents itself as a scandal and a disaster, the cankering of all human projects; the other may present a tantalising prospect of consummation. Beckett's work compounds these two aspects of finitude in the use of interruption. Beckett's finite world is always subject to interruption, which can, of course, thwart the movement towards completion. But Beckett will sometimes borrow the force of interruption, seeking to synchronise with it, for example, with his fondness for unexpected, or apparently arbitrary, forms of breaking off: "Leave it at that" (1980, 45); "Molloy could stay, where he happened to be" (1973, 91).

A recurrent quibble in Beckett concerns the question of how complete any apparent ending can be. That finitude does not always coincide straightforwardly with mortality is made clear by the fact that death itself is so indefinite in Beckett's work – one can suffer from being dead, but not necessarily "enough to bury" (1973, 7). "Over" ("Over!") is one of the most suspected words in Beckett (1980, 18). One might recall, too, the little moment of perplexity that furrows Molloy's account of his difficulty in getting his mother to understand the meaning of the four knocks he imparts to her skull:

> She seemed to have lost, if not absolutely all notion of mensuration, at least the capacity of counting beyond two. It was too far for her. By the time she came to the fourth knock she imagined she was only at the second, the first two having been erased from her memory as completely as if they had never been felt, though I don't quite see how something never felt can be erased from the memory, and yet it is a common occurrence.
>
> (1973, 18)

In order to be erased, in order for something to be there no more, it must once have been there, which always seems to the ember-anxious Beckett to come a miserable second to never having been there at all. This is a worry that ending may itself be limited, that it may not be definitive enough to cancel out the blot of having been, which may persist, unexpunged, unretractable and, perhaps worst of all, revivable.

So much, roughly speaking, for the finitude of mortality. This gets me into the vicinity of another idiom of finitude, which will, in fact, be the one on which I will be concentrating. This finitude means the inescapability of limit or restriction. The emphasis here is not on coming to an end, but on falling short, on deficiency rather than mortality. Finitude signifies a kind of privation in the heart of being, an awareness of the ever-present possibility of loss, and the looming necessity of death, which means that one is never "quite there," as Beckett said of M in *Footfalls*, and prevents one living wholly in the here and now. This aspect of finitude makes it hard to distinguish absolutely from indefiniteness. Finitude comes up short of the definite. This mode of finitude overlaps with that of temporal finitude, since, after all, death is often experienced, or represented, as just such a limit or arbitrary curtailing. Finitude here means not the certainty of coming to an end, but the certainty of ending unfinished, dying, as we all must, before our time.

But, if finitude means never being able quite to coincide with one's being here and now, it also means the inability to live anywhere else 'but' in the here and now. Finitude means embeddedness, the impossibility of ever being otherwise than at a specific place and time, *en situation*, in a specific set of circumstances that cannot be discounted or set aside as merely incidental – "the life of Monday or Tuesday," in Virginia Woolf's words (189), which must nevertheless have been written on one day of the week or other. "Death has not required us to keep a day free," says Beckett (1965, 17), reminding us nevertheless that there is a definite date in our diary assigned to it, as yet unknown to us, just as we first saw the light "on such and such a day" (1980, 8). As Philip Larkin madly asks in his poem "Days": "Where could we live but days?" The response he offers is loonier still: "solving that question / Brings the priest and the doctor / In their long coats / Running over the fields" (27).

Perhaps we might say that finitude names the coiled conjuncture of these two contrasting aspects, the lack or insufficiency that haunts being at its heart, and the irreducible excess of beastly circumstance in which we are always embedded.

Comedy is often implicated in this thinking of and at limits. This is nicely illustrated by Beckett's allusion to Jackson's parrot, which utters the words, "Nihil in intellectu" (1973, 218), but refrains from, or stops short, before what Beckett calls "the celebrated restriction" – *quod non prius in sensu.* The joke depends upon the fact that the bird seems to be saying, not that there is nothing in the mind that has not first been in the senses, but that there is nothing in the mind at all. But, since the bird is restricted, or restrains itself, from delivering the restriction, this leaves open the possibility that the mind might have unrestricted access to other things, things other than those which come to it through the senses (the idea of 'nothing,' for example). But Beckett's account includes, by allusion at any rate, the restriction that the bird does not allow, inviting us to see the rhyme between what the bird does and doesn't say and the fact that it is a bird saying it (and so not really 'saying' it at all). Parrots, and the philosophical popinjays who unthinkingly parrot slogans like this, may indeed have "nihil in intellectu," nothing in their minds at all, because everything that they say will be a matter only, and exclusively, of the sensible, with nothing of the intelligible.

Comedy often arises, or at least coincides with this ironic interference of finitude and infinitude. This suggestion is assisted by Freud's

diagnosis of the economic basis of the joke, which works by first establishing a restriction or inhibition, and then relaxing its pressure: the joke works through the elasticity of the idea of finitude, the way in which the stress of finitude, when suddenly released, can seem to release a surplus of unbound energy – though never of course infinite energy, since jokes are as subject to the second law of thermodynamics as anything else. So we find Beckett offering us a unique taxonomy of jokes, not in terms of their modes, objects or success, but in terms of their periods of expiry, yielding the distinction between jokes that had once been funny and jokes that had never been funny.

I am helped to my intent with regard to Beckett's finitude by Jean-Luc Nancy's characterisation of what he calls "finite thinking." Finite thinking, for Nancy, is impoverished or disabled thinking – thinking as a kind of existence, thinking without ground or destination, the orientation towards a kind of 'sense,' that could not hope to resume or reappropriate itself. Nancy calls it a "being -to itself [that] no longer belongs to itself, no longer comes back to itself" (8). So a finite thinking "is one that, on each occasion, thinks the fact that it is unable to think what comes to it" (15). Finitude here means incapacity to achieve completion, deficiency, shortfall – a singularity that refuses to be generalised, a *hic et nunc* never to be promoted to an anywhere or anywhen. There is no "consolation or compensation" in this kind of finitude, writes Nancy (consolingly enough, one might feel): "in finitude, there is no question of an 'end,' whether as a goal or as an accomplishment [...], it's merely a question of the suspension of sense, in-finite, each time replayed, re-opened, exposed, with a novelty so radical that it immediately fails" (10). Going along with Nancy would give us readily enough the Beckett of intemperately renewed failure, of infinite suspension or deferral of finality – a Beckett who might therefore strike us as suspiciously congenial, because too readily familiar.

This
If finitude means having to inhabit the inhibited condition of a self that does not come back to itself, Nancy also maintains that finitude means cleaving to the *hic et nunc* of that which is not taken up into factitious infinite. This seems curious: what kind of here and now can it be that cannot be grasped – not as the convergence of the grasper with the grasped, nor even perhaps as the convergence of a here with the now? A kind of its own: an experience of the unencompassability of the here and now, that is possible of access only in the here and now. Only in

the actuality of the moment can the irreducible passage – the moment mined with a motion – be grasped immediately, though this is to say, never on time, always prematurely or too late. Living in the moment is supposed to give intensity, decision, or calm, depending, because it is supposed to relieve the mind of distractions – the protractions of the past and the attractions of the future. But those distractions are of course part of the finitude of living in time, part of the constitution of the fabled moment. So living in the moment must also include the experience of the nonappropriability of the moment. The only way to live in the moment is not to seek to grasp it, which is to say to miss it. One cannot both be and have the here and now, because of the here and now's finitude, which is actual and indefinite. Indefinite, because unfinished and inappropriable by itself, as seems to be demonstrated by *Krapp's Last Tape*, when the old man (K3) listens to the ringing tones of the younger man he once was (K2) affirming that he has no need of anything now but the incandescent present: "Perhaps my best years are gone. […] But I wouldn't want them back. Not with the fire in me now" (1986, 223). K2 is limited, finite, in not knowing what he will become, as we, and the later Krapp (K3) will know it. Yet nobody else can inhabit this finitude as only he can (that is what finitude means), which means that nobody else can inhabit his uninhabitability of his now, precisely because his finitude is unfinished business until it is disclosed by the attention of K3 (or rather his inattention, since he is listening out for something much more important in his past). This is another reason why finitude can never be definitive. If K2 could have pulled it off, he would have achieved the kind of finite thinking that Nancy describes, one that "on each occasion, thinks the fact that it is unable to think what comes to it" (15). But he could only think this in general, in terms of an abstract preparedness for what the future may not bring, rather than any here-and-now finitude. Beckett does not merely seek to acknowledge finitude, he sometimes seems to want to appropriate it, to take its measure, to encompass it absolutely and without restriction (and so: 'infinitely'). But the finitude of the here and now does not belong to it: it is a yet-to-come, proleptically-belated, here and now.

Beckett's master and semi-begetter Joyce also had a preoccupation with the capture of the indefinite definiteness of the here and now, which he called "epiphany." The Joycean idea of the epiphany involves the interfusion of the finite and the infinite, or an eruption of the eternal in the temporal, and his practice tends towards the attempt, not so much to show the godly in the momentary, as though a screen were suddenly

made transparent to a blazing light behind it, as to show the radiance of
the momentary itself, untransfigured, but lifted into itself. Duns Sco-
tus's word for this is *haecceitas*, usually translated as 'thisness,' the
thing that defined what something was in itself, distinct from all others.
But Beckett has a different sense of the *haec*; indeed, the very word
seems to focus and carry his finitude. The last published work that
Beckett ever wrote funnels down through this word, this thisness,
which is now as far away from the unstinting apparition of being cele-
brated in Hopkins and Joyce as it is possible to be. 'This' names that
which is both unbearably proximate, so close at hand that all one needs
to do to designate it is to point, and at the same time unnamable, too
close, too inundatingly immediate for naming:

> folly seeing all this –
> this –
> what is the word –
> this this –
> this this here –
> all this this here –
> folly given all this –

<div align="right">(Beckett 2002, 113)</div>

The original French version is even more insistent and yet, because of
the relative abundance of demonstrative particles, gives the sense not so
much of a kind of lockjaw or stuck groove, as of a frantic splintering
under the extreme stress of ostension:

> comment dire –
> ceci –
> ce ceci –
> ceci-ci
> tout ce ceci-ci

<div align="right">(112)</div>

Thus, where the English allows us to hear a simple intensification in the
repetition of "this," the French "ce ceci" gives us a doubled, reflexive
'this,' in which the second 'this' is the object of the first, and for which
an accurate rendering would be 'this thisness here.' 'This' must always
name something immediately given in the actual or imagined vicinity
of the speaker. And yet, precisely because the referent of 'this' is not

contained in it, nor ever can be if 'this' is to retain its power to designate whatever lies to hand, to bring whatever it designates into the condition of the close-at-hand, 'this' will never be enough to name what it conjures. This, this "this," the "this this here" of "What Is the Word?" provides a perfect résumé of the condition of indefinite finitude.

I and some of my kind have devoted hours of long and more-or-less honest toil to showing the ways in which Beckett's work dissolves the claims of presence. Today, I feel more inclined to protest that what characterises Beckett's work is the effort to find his way to a presence, though a presence denuded of all determinations, its traditional, infinitive attributes – of permanence, essence, adequacy-to-self; a parched, patched, penurious presence.

Difficilis facilis

> My work is a matter of fundamental sounds (no joke intended), made as fully as possible, and I accept responsibility for nothing else. If people want to have headaches among the overtones, let them. And provide their own aspirin. Hamm as stated, and Clov as stated, together as stated *nec tecum nec sine te*, in such a place, and in such a world, that's all I can manage, more than I could.
>   (Beckett, qtd. in Harmon, 24).

This notorious statement, made in a letter to Alan Schneider of 1957, has become a canonical nut that must ceremonially be cracked, an impediment ritually swerved around, like the dreaded centre of the square in *Quad*, if criticism of Beckett's work is to proceed, and it must, it must. But let us take note of what Beckett seems to be saying here. The first thing to note is that the 'as such' on which Beckett insists is insufficient, finite – it is "all I can manage, more than I could" (and perhaps I am not alone in finding that 'could' oddly suspensive, as though it were a modal which lacked the word which would complete its sense – 'more than I could have hoped for,' 'more than I could, once'?). It is sometimes assumed by the hopefully indolent that Beckett is saying that there is nothing for exegesis to do, that criticism and interpretation are useless and indulgent superfluities, adding complexity to a work that has no need of it, because it is so simple, straightforward, and thus self-interpreting. They are, of course, given support for this by the fact that, a moment earlier in the letter, Beckett has suggested that he and Schneider "insist on the extreme simplicity of dramatic situation and

issue. If that's not enough for them, and it obviously isn't, or they don't see it, it's plenty for us" (qtd. in Harmon, 24). Even here, there is difficulty. To allow the extreme simplicity of the words themselves, to let them be "as stated," one would have to take care not to find anything to notice in the phrase "extreme simplicity"; why not simple simplicity, and leave it that – why the need to take simplicity to extremes, the need for simplicity to be 'plenty'? There is no simplicity that is truly single, with no wrinkle of implication in it.

And Beckett folds a bit of exegetical opportunity in what he writes. That *nec tecum nec sine te*, referring presumably to the impossibility for Hamm and Clov either of living with or living without each other, requires annotation for one not completely incurious or familiar with the epigrams of Martial: "Difficilis facilis, iucundus acerbus es idem: / Nec tecum possum vivere, nec sine te" (You are difficult and easy, comfortable and rough / I cannot live with you, nor without you), writes Martial to his Lesbia (3.126-27). In fact, Martial may himself borrow the phrase from Ovid's "nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum" (1.214). The phrase has the seesaw that Beckett liked: ("Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned"; "I will neither help nor hinder you"). But it also names the predicament of conjoined contraries, in which opposites are inextricably implicated in each other. Beckett may well have thought that exegesis was folly, but this is not what he says here. The *nec tecum nec sine te* may also hint that, just as Beckett cannot work in the theatre without the help of a director, cast and crew, he cannot expect his work not to provoke exegesis, which he can therefore neither live with nor without. What he says here is that he refuses to be involved with critical interpretation, and takes no responsibility for easing its passage; and says this precisely because this would loosen the lock of the predicament he is attempting to state, both with extreme simplicity and "as fully as possible."

In short, Beckett's point is not primarily to criticise or discredit exegesis, but to keep it at a distance. In other words, this is not an attack on the practice of criticism, but an attack on its linking with whatever it is that he is doing, in forming the 'matter' of his work. For Beckett to become involved in exegesis would be for him to loosen the very tension of the non-relation that is his relation with criticism, simplifying the difficulty of the *nec tecum nec sine te*.

Beckett certainly at times nursed violent fantasies of 'giving the works' to critics and other interpreters of his work who had gone to

work on him – he wrote to Schneider a little later that he dreamed "of all German directors of plays with perhaps one exception united in one with his back to the wall and me shooting a bullet into his balls every five minutes till he loses his taste for improving authors" (qtd. in Harmon, 59). But I think his austere apartness preserves the possibility of a certain kind of company. I recently heard Sophie Calle speaking about her work at the Riverside Studios. Somebody from the audience asked a long, formidably thoughtful and intelligent question about the relations that might obtain between her work and theories of mourning and melancholia. The supplicant finished his epic enquiry by asking, "so, do you think your work can be seen in these terms, or is it just me?" Sophie Calle considered, and replied: "Yes, I think you're right. [*A beat*.] It's just you." This apparently queenly swat generated the inevitable laughter, though I could detect no irritation or desire to humiliate in its tone. Sophie Calle was asking her interlocutor to take responsibility for his interpretation, was refusing to pretend to lift herself and him out of finitude, the condition of amidness in the work she made, and whatever was to be made of it.

This is rough comfort and difficult ease indeed. The point of Beckett's finitude is to resist being drawn out (the literal meaning of 'exegesis') into validation, promotion, authorisation, exculpation, explication – into public relations. Hence perhaps the "incoercible absence of relation" of which Beckett spoke (1965, 125), his disinclination to have a relation to himself or any subject other than being of or amid it – "Je ne peux pas écrire *sur*" (I can not write *about*), he wrote in 1949 to Georges Duthuit (qtd. in Gontarski and Uhlmann, 17, 20). What is important for Beckett is finding a way of interested being, being *inter esse*, not the compound interest formed in the afterlife of explication. Beckett lived in a period in which the pressures to infinitise, to lubricate the issueless predicaments of finitude, had already begun to multiply massively. In his time, and ours, Beckett's work has been subject to huge amplification and enlargement – across genres, media, languages and cultures. He has been made the centrepiece of what might be called a contemporary aesthetics of the inexhaustible, which assumes the sovereign value of endless propagation and maintains a horror of any kind of limit. Beckett found himself, as part of his own historical finitude, having to invent, always anew, ever in the middle of the way, the means of his abstention from this infinitising.

The Progress of Alimentation

Perhaps the most obvious embodiment of the factitious infinite is the internet, whose claims to illimitability are often based upon the multiplicative power of its links: the power of the internet consists not only in the very large number of items that it makes accessible, but rather in the incalculably huge numbers of ways in which they can link to each other. The internet presents a pseudo-infinity of relations, a literalisation of Henry James's insight in the preface to *Roderick Hudson* that "really, universally, relations stop nowhere" (vii).

One of the ways in which, for all his easy assimilability to the interests of the internet, Beckett remains jaggedly indigestible, is in the antagonism to linking. It is not too much to say that there is a horror of universal association that matches the horror of eternal life in Beckett. Perhaps the most obvious and difficult form of finitude in Beckett's work is its insistence on distinction, exception, apartness. A convenient method of disposing of this would be to suggest that it belongs to a neurotic and dominative desire to protect essence against accidence, where essence underpins the power of ruling minorities, traditional elites. But what are we to make of a finitude that will not relinquish the essence of accidence, the irreducibility of an essence reduced to that, to this, to 'this'?

W. R. Bion's essay "Attacks on Linking" has frequently been brought to bear on the work of the writer he had analysed twenty years before. I have myself considered it in more detail than I have time or need to recapitulate here (Connor 1998). Bion follows Melanie Klein in seeing in certain schizophrenic patients a reversion or fixation at the stage of projective identification, during which the young child will tend to split off good and bad objects from one another – typically, the good and bad breast. Despite being split off, however, these fragments are still available to the subject to form a relation with, unless, as Bion believed might happen in certain psychotic conditions, that very remaining link is itself subject to angry denial and dissolution (107).

Beckett's attacks on linking do not have the Kleinian function of keeping good and bad safely quarantined from each other. Rather they arise from a more obscure and general horror at the collapse of definitions, and the prospect it seems to open of a universal equivalence that is in fact a condition of maximum entropy. The problem is that the one who pushes the attack on linking to its limit, insisting on absolute non-correlation, is liable to turn instead to a kind of atomisation which is functionally indistinguishable from a world of universal equivalence.

These two alternatives have gastronomic analogies. Maximal combinability is imaged in Mr Knott's stew made of all manner of good things; maximal nonrelation is signified in the emetic or anorexic relationship to food – for example in the fiercely stinking cheese favoured by Belacqua Shuah in *More Pricks than Kicks*, which seems to allow him to remain aggressively distinct from his food even as he consumes it (17).

There is no doubt that the recoil from links does at times reach phobic proportions for Beckett. But it does not necessarily preclude sociality or enjoin asocial or atomistic solitude. For Beckett, relation is only possible with distance and differentiation, everything else threatening incorporation or appropriation. As Heidegger somewhat grudgingly acknowledges, and Hans-Georg Gadamer more fundamentally insists, a primary form of human finitude is our *Mitsein*, or being-with-others:

The genuine meaning of our finitude or our thrownness consists in the fact that we become aware, not only of our being historically conditioned, but especially of our being conditioned by the other. Precisely in our ethical relation to the other, it becomes clear to us how difficult it is to do justice to the demands of the other or even simply to become aware of them. The only way not to succumb to our finitude is to open ourselves to the other, to listen to the 'thou' who stands before us (Gadamer, 29). But this is no simple, self-evident, or merely given company. It is difficult ease: *nec tecum nec sine te*.

Unborderless

We think that the given, limited, actual world is what presses most stiflingly upon us, and that it requires strenuous exertion or careful vigilance to break the fascinating grip of facticity, in order that we can project ourselves into possibility, futurity, transcendence, infinity – or what Badiou calls "the happiness of a truthful arousal of the void" (36). Finiteness, we dream, is the merely given, infinity that which is made or imagined in excess of the given. But it is in fact the realm of the given, or the so-called self-evident, that is most intractable to human thought. We find it almost impossible to grasp or coincide with this realm of the given, the incontinently-renewable once-and-for-allness of every instant, the statute of limitations of every project. Our apprehension skeeters off the actual into whatever might prolong or retard it, making what shift we can, through fantasy, religion, literature, commerce, to remit its finitude.

I spent the first half of my sentient life pointing to everything in Beckett that seemed to qualify, complicate, defer or infinitise – all the near-misses, failures of correspondence, 'vaguenings,' temporisings, that seem to tend towards infinity – and trying to loosen the adherence to finitude that haunts that work everywhere. My first book on Beckett attempted to negate the closure of repetition, prising open its fist to show the various forms of inexhaustibility that characterise his work. That work, though necessary, at one time, if only for me, now seems to me in the light of an evasion, an attempt to turn unwisely tail from the exacting penury of the finite in Beckett's work. Nancy quotes a warning from Heidegger against this evasion: "When being is posited as infinite, it is precisely then that it is *determined*. If it is posited as finite, it is then that its absence of ground is affirmed" (qtd. in Nancy, 9).

Among the many unique accomplishments alleged by human beings of themselves is their capacity to grasp the inescapability of their own deaths. On the contrary, the great human sickness is infinitude, the incapacity to seize finitude seriously and sustainedly. It is not just that we do not take seriously the 'one day' of abstract death; it is that we find it almost impossibly hard to apprehend the limited and finite nature of the lives we live every day, the fact that we can live only the life we can live, "in such a place and in such a world" (qtd. in Harmon, 24). To say that Beckett's work constitutes a radical finitude is to say that it strives to permit itself the very least remission it can manage from this awareness of always having to live, move and have its being "in such a world" "on such and such a day" (Beckett 1980, 8), never in the world in general, or 'as such.' Beckett is, as Heidegger alleged animals were, "poor in world," poor in the worldhood of 'the world.'

Nancy names four ways in which finitude is disallowed, or deported from itself: extermination; expropriation; simulation and technology. One might add to this the lexicon of the illimitable that has flourished in philosophy and criticism. This lexicon includes, but is not restricted to, 'jouissance,' 'the semiotic,' 'différance,' 'the immaterial,' 'the differend,' 'flow,' 'the impotential,' 'desire,' and, of course, and, the original perhaps of these many assumed names, 'life.' Against these, Nancy offers an ethics of finitude: "Since the-here-and now *is* finitude, the inappropriability of sense, every appropriation of the 'here' by an 'elsewhere,' and of the 'now' by an 'afterward' (or by a 'beforehand') is and does *evil*" (19).

Some of the rare moments of saturated calm in Beckett's work come from this refusal of deported being, the acceptance of the only

possible towards which all things hobble: "There we are, there I am, that's enough" (1986, 133). Nancy evokes an "enjoyment – if the notion of enjoyment is not that of appropriation, but of a sense (in all the senses) which, here and now, does not come back to itself" (21), which seems close to the "happiness" seemingly glimpsed at the end of *Ill Seen Ill Said*, in which calm comes, not from satiety, but from its prospect, the momentary opening of the prospect of closing off: "Farewell to farewell. Then in that perfect dark foreknell darling sound pip for end begun. First last moment. Grant only enough remain to devour all. Moment by glutton moment. Sky earth the whole kit and boodle. Not another crumb of carrion left. Lick chops and basta. No. One moment more. One last. Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness" (1996, 86). Alain Badiou sees rare moments like this as 'events,' that serve both to dissolve and to infinitise the subject that is otherwise pent in its finitude:

> The Two, which is inaugurated by the encounter and whose truth results from love, does not remain closed in upon itself. Rather, it is a passage, a pivotal point, *the first numericality*. This Two constitutes a passage, or authorises the pass, from the One of solipsism (which is the first datum) to the infinity of beings and of experience. The Two of love is a hazardous and chance-laden meditation for alterity in general. It elicits a rupture or a severance of the *cogito*'s One; by virtue of this very fact, however, it can hardly stand on its own, opening instead onto the limitless multiple of Being.
>
> (28)

Like Lyotard, Badiou makes of the event a kind of epiphany, an opening that makes way for something else. The event opens on to the undetermined nature of things, constituting a break in the chain of determinations. The event exposes the subject to the privation of being un- or under-determined – confronted by the *il y a*, with only that to go on. For Badiou and Lyotard, events are both rare and exemplary, and thus at least potentially consequential: they extend, propagate, ramify. But events in Beckett are neither rare nor consequential. Every new moment renews, without deepening, exposure to finitude. Beckett's finitude is radical in this sense, that it casts no shadow, inaugurates no series. Finitude has no syntax; it is perseverance without project. This accounts for the power of repetition, the awareness of 'that again,' the epiphany that

shows and gives rise to nothing, and yet recurs, paratactic, a privation deprived of improvement. It is this which makes it a "finite thinking" in Nancy's sense. More than just thinking that keeps finitude in mind, as a precaution or memento, it is a thinking that is itself finite. Nancy's work helps us to characterise Beckett's finitude, provided we recognise that the latter does not provide itself with principles in this way: that it does not allow itself to persist indefinitely in the finite condition of not being able to make an end. It refuses the infinitising tendency – and consolation – of Nancy's finite thinking, does not allow the certainty of there being an end, to everything, inevitably, to sediment into an abstract, and therefore end-averting certification.

This means that Beckett's work should be held back from philosophy, should be allowed to fall short of philosophy, to come up short before it, precisely because of its desire not to infinitise finitude. When Bem and Bom report the failure of their attempts to extort confessions, BAM says, "It's a lie." I want to hear in that the echo of King Lear's cry "They told me I was everything. 'Tis a lie. I am not ague-proof" (4.6.104). If we want Beckett to be everything, we are on our own. My point is that, in delivering Beckett up to the infinitude from which he shrank, whether in construing his work as itself a "jouissance des limites," as Evelyne Grossman called it in her paper at the Borderless Beckett conference, as an Aladdin's cave of hermeneutical opportunity, or a source for henceforth unconstrained performative reappropriations, as Stan Gontarski suggested in his paper, or as a work wholly unconstrained by season or territory, a work without borders, we do a violence to what may be the most difficult and distinct provocation of his work. (See the essays by Grossman and Gontarski in this volume. Ed.) Evelyne Grossman saw in Beckett's work what she called a "counter-depressive decomposition," recalling the Ignatian practice of "composition of time and place"; I might be said to be asserting a counter-euphoric composition.

Radical finitude, I have said. By this, I do not mean rigorous, programmatic or totalising infinitude, the root-and-branch, eradicating wholehoggery that always seems to come in the train of what is called 'radical thought.' Beckett's finitude is both a predicament and a choice, the choice of a predicament: "in search of the difficulty rather than in its clutch" (Beckett 1983, 139). It is a finitude that is never used up, or said and done a finitude never to be fully accounted for, abbreviated or economised on, because there will always be, what there only ever is, more of the here and now. A finitude that, seemingly without let or

cease, itself remains finite. This surely might be an addition to company, if only up to a point.

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À LA LIMITE…:
lecture de *Cette fois* de Samuel Beckett

Evelyne Grossman

In *Cette fois*, the apparent circular confinement of discourse opens up and overflows: outside of space, outside of time. Beyond anxiety, every reader or spectator of *Cette fois* passes through this erotization of limits. In order to read this text we must continuously replay the drama of separation, 'be in transit' (in several meanings of the term) in a temporary location, a location without a location. If the modern tendency, as Deleuze suggests, is to include the outside 'within' the world and not without, in a world beyond, Beckett's mad topologies perhaps are attempts at inventing the writing of another form of (atheistic? sacred?) infinity.

Écrire sur Samuel Beckett est pour moi toujours une épreuve. À chaque fois je me dis que cette fois c'est fini. Terminé. Jamais plus ces vieilles histoires de Samuel Beckett avec ces vieillards qui n'en finissent pas de radoter, ces mêmes étendues vides et grises à perte de vue. Et à chaque fois pourtant, et cette fois encore, je m'y remets, je recommence à lire Samuel Beckett, à écrire sur ses textes. Pourquoi est-ce une épreuve? Pour plusieurs raisons sans doute, et d'abord celle-ci. Nous avons tous, me semble-t-il, pour peu que nous ne soyons pas trop psychiquement 'normalisés' ('normopathisés,' oserai-je dire, si l'on me passe l'expression, c'est-à-dire barricadés derrière de fortes cuirasses narcissiques qui assèchent nos affects),[1] nous avons tous une réaction de défense, de sauvegarde face aux textes de Samuel Beckett, en particulier les textes dits de la fin… On se protège alors en parlant à leur propos d'abstraction, de rigueur mathématique, de 'construction prosodique de l'être,' discours qui tiennent parfois, de la part de la critique, du réflexe de survie.

Il me semble que pour lire Beckett, pour le voir représenté, et notamment s'agissant de ces textes de plus en plus brefs qu'il commence à écrire dès la fin des années 50 (*La dernière bande*, *Cendres*), il nous faut avant tout traverser, re-traverser la dépression de Beckett. Toute sa

vie, on le sait, il écrivit 'contre' la dépression, au cours de périodes plus ou moins brèves, plus ou moins intenses d'activité créatrice, qui étaient à chaque fois de courtes victoires gagnées de haute lutte non pas, comme on pourrait le croire, contre la décomposition des corps et des mots, mais contre les formes figées, les formes mortes du sens. Je vais y revenir, mais je voulais d'ores et déjà souligner à quel point il n'y a pas pour moi d'autre façon de le lire que d'entrer avec lui dans cette décomposition contre-dépressive. C'est lorsqu'on se crispe sur les formes, me semble-t-il, contrairement à ce qu'on croit souvent, qu'on se 'normopathise' ou bien qu'on déprime. C'est le prix à payer pour que sa lecture devienne drôle, jubilatoire, voire éblouissante de beauté. Il faut donc tenter à chaque fois une lecture dynamique, au sens étymologique du terme, c'est-à-dire qui fasse bouger le texte, qui le mette en mouvement, autrement dit qui retrouve ce que devait être l'écriture (comme la peinture) pour Beckett: une "stase grouillante," une "insurrection des molécules" (1989, 33); une forme en mouvement, donc, pas une forme morte.

De quoi parler, donc, ici de nouveau? D'abord de la répétition, du 'cette fois encore…,' de cette pièce de théâtre nommée *Cette fois* (*That Time*), à entendre à la fois comme le 'cette fois encore' de la répétition et le 'cette fois-là' du souvenir, de l'autrefois; c'est aussi sur cette ambiguïté des références que joue ce texte.

On pourrait – pour ne pas lire 'dans l'ordre' un texte sans vrai début ni réelle fin – partir de ces trois phrases, prises en plein milieu de *Cette fois* (mais où est le milieu?, "je suis bien au centre?" répétait Hamm):

> jusqu'à n'y voir qu'une de ces histoires que tu allais inventant *pour contenir le vide* qu'encore une de ces vieilles fables pour pas que vienne le vide t'ensevelir le suaire
>
> ou seul dans les mêmes scènes l'inventant ainsi histoire de *tenir contenir le vide* sur la pierre
>
> cette dernière fois où tu as essayé et n'a pas pu […] plus moyen *plus de mots pour contenir le vide*
>
> (14, 19, 23; je souligne)

Question: que peut bien signifier "contenir le vide"? Au moins deux choses sur lesquelles le français (et Beckett) joue: (1) les mots parlent à

la place du vide, 'le remplissent' ('contenir' signifiant ici réprimer, retenir); (2) les mots 'enferment' en eux le vide, l'englobent. Indistinctement donc, et de façon non contradictoire, les mots sont à l'intérieur du vide et le vide est à l'intérieur des mots. Ils le remplissent comme il les remplit. C'est cette topologie paradoxale, 'à la limite' de la folie, que je voudrais interroger chez Beckett et singulièrement dans ses textes brefs, 'minimalistes,' de la fin. Renversant toute notion de contenu et de contenant, de dehors et de dedans, de clôture et d'ouverture, ils invitent à écrire l'infini, à explorer ce qu'Emmanuel Levinas appelait, à propos de Blanchot, un "séjour sans lieu" (22).

    Cette fois, on s'en souvient, est une pièce que Beckett a d'abord écrite en anglais, entre juin 1974 et août 1975, juste après *Pas moi* (*Not I*). Pourquoi ai-je choisi, entre autres, de parler de *Cette fois*? D'abord parce que c'est un texte qui est caractéristique de l'écriture-limite de Beckett et ce colloque nous invite à interroger un Beckett sans frontières, sans bords ou sans limites. Peu avant la représentation de la pièce à Londres, il confie à James Knowlson qu'il est conscient d'avoir écrit une pièce "at the very edge of what was possible in the theatre" (cité dans Knowlson, 532). Nous sommes bien, en effet, à la limite du représentable.

    Beckett a suggéré que la pièce était en quelque sorte le double ou le petit frère de *Pas moi*, écrit deux ans plus tôt. *Pas moi*, comme l'on sait, est fondé sur l'image unique d'une 'bouche en feu,' qui débite à toute vitesse un texte d'abord inintelligible – texte qu'écoute un peu plus loin sur la même scène, un auditeur indéterminé, encapuchonné dans une djellaba. La conception de ces deux pièces (*Cette fois* et *Pas moi*) et leur réalisation technique est tellement semblable que Beckett avait précisé qu'il ne voulait pas qu'elles soient jouées ensemble au cours de la même représentation. "La ficelle est la même," aurait-il dit (cité dans Fehsenfeld 1990b, 366). Dans *Cette fois*, la focalisation se fait sur un 'personnage' unique, personnage qui s'appelle en français le 'Souvenant' et en anglais, *the Listener* (un auditeur à nouveau, comme dans *Pas moi*). De ce Souvenant, on a ce que Beckett a appelé joliment un "portrait éclairé" (cité dans Fehsenfeld, 366). Sa tête isolée surgit en effet comme en suspension dans le noir à trois mètres au-dessus de la scène. Lorsque la pièce commence, la scène est dans l'obscurité et l'on entend les "*bribes d'une seule et même voix, la sienne,*" voix nommées "A, B, C" et qui lui parviennent par des haut-parleurs des deux côtés et d'en haut. Triptyque sonore et musical, a-t-on dit, à juste titre. Voilà donc le dispositif. Assez peu 'théâtral,' au sens classique du terme.

Cette fois est l'un de ces textes de Beckett que je trouve étrange-
ment fascinants, quasi hypnotiques: à la fois très noir, désespéré, dé-
primant donc (dans la veine de *Solo*, de *Berceuse* ou d'*Impromptu
d'Ohio*, pour citer ces quelques pièces contemporaines) et, en même
temps, étonnamment léger, comme aérien ou détaché… en suspens,
peut-être, comme la tête du Souvenant qui plane au-dessus de la scène.
D'une part en effet, c'est une pièce où règne l'obscurité, la perte des
souvenirs, la solitude, la mort, la poussière qui ensevelit tout à la fin.
On se rappelle les derniers mots ou presque (on entend la voix C, celle
du vieil homme) énonçant ceci: "pas un bruit sinon les vieux souffles et
les pages tournées lorsque soudain cette poussière le lieu tout entier
plein de poussière en rouvrant les yeux du plancher au plafond rien que
poussière et pas un bruit" (24). Cela se termine donc comme cela… ou
presque. Car d'autre part, à la fin, les yeux du Souvenant s'ouvrent (il
les a eus alternativement ouverts et fermés, suivant le rythme d'un
étrange clignotement au ralenti sur lequel je reviendrai aussi); ses yeux
donc s'ouvrent, on entend toujours sa respiration "*lente et régulière*"
(9) (autre rythme) et là… j'allais dire: 'coup de théâtre,' mais c'en est
un: sur le visage du Souvenant, se dessine soudain un "*sourire, édenté
de préférence.*" Puis: "*7 secondes. L'éclairage s'éteint lentement. Ri-
deau*" (25). C'est bien un coup de théâtre, c'est même le seul événe-
ment de cette pièce où rien ne bouge, où d'un point de vue scénogra-
phique il ne se passe rigoureusement rien (ou presque, excepté ces yeux
alternativement ouverts et fermés). Même pas, donc, comme dans *Co-
médie*, le rayon du projecteur qui "extorque" tour à tour leur parole aux
trois têtes qui dépassent des jarres. Pas même non plus les mouvements
frénétiques des lèvres, et de la langue dans la Bouche, lorsqu'elle débite
son flot de paroles comme dans *Pas Moi*. Pas même le léger balance-
ment d'une berceuse. Rien.

Qu'est-ce donc alors que cet étrange sourire de la fin qui vient
contredire l'apparent règne de la mort et de la poussière aux dernières
lignes? D'abord il faut le noter, il surgit comme un pied de nez (si tant
est qu'un sourire puisse être un pied de nez). C'est en tout cas une sorte
d'incongruité, une fausse note qui vient rompre l'atmosphère uniform-
mément tragique de la fin; une fin shakespearienne d'ailleurs, si l'on en
croit Knowlson qui rapproche cette poussière qui envahit tout alors, de
la "dusty death" du dernier monologue de Macbeth (532). On s'en sou-
vient, c'est au dernier acte, on vient d'annoncer à Macbeth la mort de la
Reine, Lady Macbeth, et il prononce alors son bref éloge:

> Demain, puis demain, puis demain glisse à petits pas de jour en jour jusqu'à la dernière syllabe du registre des temps (To the last syllable of recorded time); et tous nos hiers n'ont fait qu'éclairer pour des fous le chemin de la mort poudreuse (And all our yesterdays have lighted fools the way to dusty death). Eteins-toi, éteins-toi, court flambeau! (Out, out, brief candle!)
>
> (Acte V, scène v)

C'est juste après que vient la fameuse citation faulknérienne: "Life's but a walking shadow" (La vie n'est qu'un fantôme errant, un pauvre comédien qui se pavane et s'agite durant son heure sur la scène et qu'ensuite on n'entend plus… etc…). Mort poussiéreuse ou poudreuse, donc qui ensevelit peu à peu chez Beckett ce fantôme errant qu'est le Souvenant et ses voix spectrales…

Le sourire édenté du Souvenant détonne évidemment dans cette atmosphère tragique. Cette dissonance est d'ailleurs exactement la même, mais inversée, que celle de la fin de *Mal vu mal dit* où les dernières pages évoquent l'envahissement de la mort, la fin de la journée, la fin de la vie et dont le dernier mot, pourtant, est le mot "bonheur" ("Connaître le bonheur"). Gardons cette idée de dissonance pour l'instant, en évitant surtout de prêter une intention psychologique à ce sourire édenté du Souvenant: il n'est ni moqueur, ni narquois, ni sardonique… il '<u>est</u>,' tout simplement. On connaît d'ailleurs la réponse qu'avait faite Beckett aux questions posées par Alan Schneider, le premier metteur en scène de *Pas moi* en 1972, à propos de l'image flottante et solitaire de la bouche: "Je ne sais pas davantage qu'elle, où elle se trouve ni pourquoi" – aurait répondu Beckett – "Il n'y a que le texte et l'image scénique. Le reste c'est de l'Ibsen" (cité dans Fehsenfeld 1990a, 184). Oublions donc Ibsen (grande référence joycienne, soit dit au passage)**,** et contentons-nous de remarquer que le sourire édenté de la fin est l'équivalent du "je vais continuer" de *L'innommable*: je ne peux pas continuer, je vais continuer… Ici: je sombre enseveli sous la poussière… je souris…: même opposition radicale non résolue et qui reste là en suspens, au bord du déséquilibre.

C'est ce suspens que je voudrais explorer ici, ce suspens qui donne lieu à toute une série de 'passages' mettant le texte en mouvement, autrement dit le faisant paradoxalement 'vivre'… Mais d'abord il faut rappeler d'un mot quelles sont les bribes d' 'histoires' qui nous sont ici racontées. Trois voix, donc, A, B, et C. Un flottement marque leur définition puisque Beckett a évolué dans sa conception au fur et à mesure

de la rédaction. Il avait d'abord imaginé, on le sait, que les fragments de ces trois voix qu'entend le Souvenant incarnaient trois moments, trois âges différents de sa vie passée – celles d'un jeune homme, d'un homme d'âge mûr, d'un vieil homme – pas nécessairement dans cet ordre-là d'ailleurs puisque, on va le voir, un principe de désordre et d'incertitude est à l'origine même de ce texte. Les souvenirs lui reviendraient ainsi par bribes, par vagues, de façon apparemment désordonnée, liés pourtant par une secrète logique comme tous les souvenirs. Beckett avait prévu que la voix A soit celle de la confusion des noms et des lieux; la voix B, celle de la confusion de la pensée; la voix C celle de la confusion des sensations. En fait, rien de tout cela ne se retrouve aussi clairement distingué dans la version finale même s'il en reste quelque chose.

Nous sommes apparemment face à trois séries de souvenirs parallèles qui sont aussi, Beckett l'a indiqué, des fragments parfois autobiographiques, des souvenirs de sa propre vie (Knowlson, 532-33):

(1) ceux de la voix A revenant sur les lieux de l'enfance, cherchant tout en haut d'une ville qui pourrait être Dublin, les ruines d'une 'folie' (au double sens du terme sans doute: folie psychique, pavillon d'agrément, lieu de plaisir). Je cite, début du texte: "cette fois où tu es retourné cette dernière fois voir si elle était là toujours la ruine où enfant tu te cachais quand c'était" (9). Leitmotiv: être assis sur une pierre plate, au milieu des orties et s'inventer des histoires.

(2) les souvenirs de la voix C (la deuxième à parler, la dernière à se taire, sans ordre de succession chronologique), cherchant alternativement à s'inventer et à se désinventer si je puis dire (à se créer et à se "dé-créer," comme dirait Beckett) et qui donc "vadrouille" de lieux en lieux en titubant. Je cite: "la pluie et l'éternelle vadrouille cherchant à l'inventer ainsi à t'inventer ainsi au fur et à mesure à essayer voir ce que ça donnerait pour changer ne pas avoir été ce que ça pourrait bien donner n'avoir jamais été" (17). Leitmotiv: être assis sur une dalle de marbre, à l'abri du froid et de la pluie à l'intérieur d'un édifice public (musée, bibliothèque municipale, bureau de poste) et attendre que cela sèche (les vêtements comme l'inspiration – "que la bouche tarisse" comme il dit) attendre l'heure de la fermeture, le moment où on sera jeté dehors.

(3) souvenirs de la voix B enfin, se remémorant une histoire d'amour peut-être inventée, se déroulant sur fond de paysage peut-être irlandais. Leitmotiv: être assis sur une pierre, au milieu d'une nature indifférente et se demander si on existe vraiment.

À chaque fois donc: immobilité, solitude, silence. Refrain: "pas trace de vie pas âme dehors qui vive," "pas un bruit pas un mot," "rien qui bouge aucun bruit" (10, 11, 18). Nous aurions là des voix s'évanouissant peu à peu, rassemblant des bribes de souvenirs avant que la mort, le vide, la poussière, quelque "vaste suaire" (comme il est dit) ne vienne tout ensevelir (24). Ce qui serait donc raconté, par bribes et fragments, ce serait une même histoire désespérante traçant la ligne orientée d'un destin, avec un début et une fin: tout le texte irait vers cette progressive extinction des voix, leur effacement, la mort du Souvenant. Mais est-ce bien cela? Car après tout, première remarque, le texte forme boucle, se referme sur lui-même en cercle. Il commence par "*Rideau. Scène dans l'obscurité*" (9); il se termine par "*L'éclairage s'éteint lentement. Rideau*" (25). Rideau – obscurité – obscurité – rideau: la série décrit un chiasme. Autrement dit, c'est un cercle plus qu'une ligne, un peu comme dans *Comédie*, dix ans plus tôt, cette pièce qui recommence à l'infini puisque Beckett note à la fin: "*Reprendre la pièce.*" Remarquons qu'il ne dit pas s'il faut à un moment donné arrêter de "reprendre la pièce," arrêter de tout recommencer depuis le début quand on est arrivé à la fin et ainsi de suite, à l'infini.

Ensuite, deuxième remarque, le "cette fois" (that time) qui donne son titre au texte et rythme la plupart des interventions des voix, ce "cette fois" n'est inséré dans aucune temporalité précise, il flotte lui aussi comme la tête du Souvenant en suspens au-dessus de la scène. "Cette fois" c'était quand, à partir de quand? C'est ce que se demandent aussi les voix. Par exemple voix B (celle de 'l'histoire' d'amour): "ou cette fois seul sur le dos dans les dunes sans serments pour troubler la paix quand c'était ça / avant ou après / avant qu'elle soit là / après son départ / ou les deux / avant qu'elle soit là / après qu'elle fut partie / et toi de retour dans la même scène / où qu'elle fût / la même vieille scène / avant qu'alors / alors qu'après […] cette fois où tu es retourné peu après bien après" (21). Confusion temporelle, on le voit, sans avant ni après clairement définis, sans repérage chronologique possible, faute du moindre élément fixe qui déterminerait le point de départ, le moment où tout cela a commencé, puis recommencé. Qu'est-ce qu'un "cette fois" qui n'est indexé sur aucune temporalité? Le temps ici, comme toujours chez Beckett, piétine à l'infini, hors limites.

Car d'ailleurs, "cette fois," était-ce bien 'une seule' fois ou plutôt une infinité de fois qui ont recommencé, toujours les mêmes ou à peu près? Et en effet la voix (les voix) du Souvenant s'évertuent en vain à se repérer dans cette coulée ininterrompue de tous ces temps, tous ces

instants, cette répétition de scènes jamais les mêmes tout à fait, toujours les mêmes ou presque. Une fois, un planeur est passé au-dessus des têtes des deux amants et depuis, toujours le même planeur passe sans arrêt. Est-ce qu'il est d'ailleurs jamais passé? Voix B: "le planeur qui passait / jamais / de changement mêmes cieux / toujours / jamais / rien de changé" (22).

Ou encore: vieille question beckettienne: quand tout cela a-t-il 'commencé' finalement? La première fois, c'était quand? Est-ce qu'il y a une borne, une limite, un début à tout cela? Est-on sûr, après tout, d'être né à un moment ou à un autre, ne serait-ce… qu'une fois, autrefois? Voix C, celle du vieil homme: "cette fois petit vermisseau blotti dans la vase où ils t'ont tiré de là et débarbouillé et détortillé jamais d'autre tournant depuis celui-là droit devant toi à partir de là ou est-ce que c'était ça une autre fois tout ça une autre fois" (15). Et inversement, à l'autre bout, va-t-on vraiment mourir un jour, est-ce que cela va enfin finir, une bonne fois pour toutes… comme l'on dit, une dernière bonne fois pour toutes?

D'autant plus que dans cette écriture diffractée en trois voix, Beckett expérimente, me semble-t-il, un paradoxe temporel assez surprenant, déstabilisant pour le spectateur-lecteur. Il ne s'agit plus en effet, comme dans *En attendant Godot,* de l'attente d'un événement futur qui ne vient pas, qui n'arrivera jamais, mais, par une étrange torsion temporelle, de l'attente d'un événement… 'passé' dont on n'a jamais fini d'attendre qu'il ne se produise pas. Si bien que finalement on sait rétrospectivement que cette fois là… il ne s'est rien passé. Autrement dit encore, ce dont on se souvient c'est d'une absence d'événement qui n'en a jamais fini de ne pas survenir… Voix C: "jamais le même après cela jamais tout à fait le même […] après quoi tu ne *pouvais jamais être le même* te traînant à longueur d'année jusqu'au cou dans ton gâchis de toujours en te marmonnant à qui d'autre *tu ne seras jamais le même* après ceci *tu n'as jamais été le même* après cela" (13; je souligne). "Après ceci," donc, "après cela"… mais 'cela, quoi'? Cela… rien! Rien, dans ce marasme où toutes les références temporelles se mélangent ("pouvais," "seras," "jamais été… le même")… Jusqu'à ce que la voix C, toujours elle, demande: "jamais le même mais *le même que qui*" (14; je souligne); "le même que qui…?" bonne question, en effet, puisque aucune identité fixée ne peut garantir la stabilité référentielle d'un quelconque sujet.

Question, donc : *Cette fois* (tout comme *La dernière bande* dans une autre mesure) est-il la *Recherche du temps perdu* beckettienne?

Relisons un instant le *Proust* de Beckett (1930). Qu'expérimente Proust, selon Beckett (en tout cas c'est ainsi que j'interprète à mon tour sa lecture de Proust)? Que le passage en nous du temps nous détermine comme 'êtres de passage,' autrement dit transitoires, en perpétuelle transformation. L'action du temps a pour résultat

> une modification incessante de la personnalité, dont la réalité permanente, pour autant qu'il en existe une, ne peut être conçue que comme *une hypothèse rétrospective*. L'être est le siège d'un processus ininterrompu de transvasement, transvasement du récipient qui contient l'eau de l'avenir, atone, blafarde et monochrome, dans le récipient qui contient l'eau du passé, agitée, colorée par le grouillement des heures éculées.
>
> (25; je souligne)

Voilà donc ce que Beckett lit dans Proust: il n'y pas de permanence de l'être. Tout coule, tout glisse, tout passe sans arrêt d'un état à un autre: nous sommes une succession fragile d'instants instables. On se souvient de Watt qui sentait parfois tout bouger et glisser autour de lui, se dissoudre dans un fourmillement de grains de stable:

> Glisse – isse – isse STOP. J'espère que c'est clair. Il y a une grande alpe de sable, haute d'une centaine de mètres, entre les pins et l'océan, et là dans la chaude nuit sans lune, quand personne ne voit, personne n'écoute, par infimes paquets de deux ou trois millions les grains glissent, tous ensemble, un petit glissement de deux ou trois millimètres peut-être, puis s'arrêtent, tous ensemble, pas un en moins […] C'est ce genre de glissement que je ressentis, ce mardi après-midi, des millions de petites choses s'en allant toutes ensemble de leur vieille place dans une nouvelle, tout à côté, et sournoisement, comme si c'était défendu.
>
> (43)

Ou encore, sensation hallucinée similaire chez Malone qui décrit l'étrange vision d'une main égrenant une à une les particules de son moi: "je nous retrouve tels que nous sommes, savoir à enlever grain par grain jusqu'à ce que, la fatigue aidant, la main se mette à jouer, à se remplir et à se vider sur place, rêveusement comme on dit. […] cette sensation m'est de tout temps familière, d'une main lasse et aveugle

mollement creusant dans mes particules et les faisant couler entre ses doigts" (1951b, 82-83).

Appelons cela donc une expérience proustienne, revue par Beckett, de l'atomisation du temps, de l'espace et des corps. Je précise 'revue par Beckett' car il n'est pas sûr du tout, naturellement, que ce soit exactement cela que Proust ait voulu dire. Ce qui m'intéresse ici, c'est l'interprétation, la lecture que fait Beckett de Proust, dans la mesure où elle me semble anticiper, dès ces années 30, une conception fondamentalement atomiste et décomposée du réel et du sujet. Ce que lit Beckett chez Proust donc, c'est que nous sommes des êtres pluriels et successifs, ou encore que "des sujets innombrables constituent un seul être" (29). Qu'est-ce qui fait cependant que nous pouvons continuer malgré tout à dire 'je,' à nous rassembler provisoirement en un sujet unifié? Ce sont deux choses selon Proust-Beckett: l'habitude d'abord, la mémoire volontaire ensuite.

La mémoire volontaire, dit Beckett, c'est "l'émissaire de l'habitude" qui affirme par exemple au dormeur, lorsqu'il se réveille, que son moi ne s'est pas évanoui comme a disparu sa fatigue, qu'il est toujours "le même" (mais comme dit l'autre en effet, "le même que qui?"). C'est elle en tout cas qui assure notre permanence, notre stabilité identitaire – ce que Beckett appelle joliment le "plagiat de soi-même" (1990, 44). Le problème est que, comme l'on sait, les personnages de Beckett sont souvent amnésiques… Ils n'ont aucune mémoire, ni volontaire, ni involontaire… Ils ont oublié leur nom, ce qu'on leur a dit l'instant d'avant, ils errent, au hasard de chemins devenus inconnus, perdant peu à peu le fil de leur discours. Comme Molloy, Vladimir… ou les voix de *Cette fois* qui s'embrouillent dans les fils du passé.

Et d'ailleurs, chez Proust non plus, écrit Beckett en 1930, la mémoire ne permet pas de 'retrouver' le passé. Même la fameuse "mémoire involontaire," celle de la madeleine ou des pavés inégaux de Venise, elle ne peut au bout du compte nous redonner que la mort. Finalement, souligne Beckett, il ne s'agit pas de retrouver le temps chez Proust; il s'agit de l'abolir. Seule l'extase de l'art peut nous sauver du temps et de la mort. Ainsi chez Proust, suggère Beckett, le passé ne 'passe' pas, il n'est jamais 'dépassé,' il 's'entasse': "Hier n'est pas un jalon que nous aurions dépassé, c'est un caillou des vieux sentiers rebattus des années qui fait partie de nous irrémédiablement, que nous portons en nous, lourd et menaçant" (23).

On comprend mieux alors cette poussière qui monte lentement, du plancher au plafond, s'entasse et recouvre tout à la fin de *Cette fois*. Les

voix ne se souviennent pas du passé dans un mouvement rétrospectif qui l'ordonnerait et lui donnerait sens. C'est un passé en ruine toujours présent qui s'entasse à côté d'eux, qui peu à peu les recouvre et dans lequel les personnages lentement décomposés et tombant en ruine s'effacent et se fondent. Songeons à *Pour finir encore*, à *Bing*, à *Lessness* (*Sans*). Plus tôt, déjà, Molloy l'estropié décomposé, Malone qui n'en finit pas de mourir, Mahood le crâne couvert de pustules, tous se posent finalement la même question que le narrateur de *L'innommable*:

> pourquoi le temps ne passe pas, ne vous laisse pas, pourquoi il vient s'entasser autour de vous, instant par instant, de tous les côtés, de plus en plus haut, de plus en plus épais, votre temps à vous, celui des autres, celui des vieux morts et des morts à naître, pourquoi il vient vous enterrer à compte-gouttes ni mort ni vivant, sans mémoire de rien, sans espoir de rien, sans connaissance de rien, sans histoire ni avenir, enseveli sous les secondes, racontant n'importe quoi, la bouche pleine de sable […].
>
> (171)

Deleuze a raison de dire qu'il y a chez Beckett "une fantastique décomposition du moi," "puanteur et agonie comprise" (1992, 63), mais il faut préciser alors à quel point Beckett 'fait jouer' (dans tous les sens du terme) le vide, à quel point l'angoisse de mort chez lui s'inverse peu à peu en érotisation, en jouissance des limites. C'est sur cette question que je veux revenir, pour finir.

C'est donc un principe général d'incertitude quant à la temporalité qui régit tout le texte de *Cette fois*. Tout est pris dans un incessant mouvement qui fait bouger constamment les repères: rien n'est fixe, tout glisse sans arrêt. Ainsi le chiffre 11 (le même 11!) peut indiquer pour la voix A indifféremment le numéro du tram, une date (… et encore, dont on n'est pas sûr: "voilà dix onze ans") ou l'âge d'un enfant ("onze douze ans dans la ruine sur la pierre plate"; 21). Incertitude temporelle donc, dans ce monde où tous les repères se déplacent au fur et à mesure qu'on tente de les fixer, mais incertitude aussi quant à l'espace car le cadre est indéfini et ouvert, les limites sont floues: le dedans souvent se renverse en dehors. Ainsi le 'personnage' de la voix C regardant les tableaux dans le musée où il s'est mis à l'abri de la pluie ("au bout d'un moment ayant hissé la tête rouvert les yeux une vaste huile noire d'antiquité et de crasse […] derrière le verre où peu à peu devant tes yeux écarquillés" (12) et qui se demande s'il n'est pas lui-même ce

crasseux portrait devant lequel les curieux passent sans le regarder. Je cite: "sans parler de ton aspect repoussant […] sous tous ces yeux qui te glissaient dessus ou te passaient à travers comme à travers une fumée" (22). Qui regarde qui, donc? Qui est tableau, qui est spectateur? Où est le vrai, le monde 'réel,' où est la représentation? Où passe la limite?

Car, après tout, est-ce le Souvenant qui donne naissance à ses voix ou sont-ce les voix qui l'inventent et le récitent, le maintiennent ainsi suspendu entre lumière et obscurité, entre sommeil (yeux fermés) et écoute (yeux ouverts)? Et nous-mêmes, lecteur ou spectateur de ce texte, sommes-nous finalement dans une position si clairement définie? Qu'est-ce que l'on regarde, d'ailleurs, exactement et depuis quel lieu? Le visage du Souvenant, précisent les didascalies, est à la fois et paradoxalement situé "*à environ 3 mètres au-dessus du niveau de la scène*" (donc, le spectateur est plus bas que lui) et en même temps il a de "*longs cheveux blancs dressés comme* vus de haut *étalés sur un oreiller*" (9; je souligne). Autrement dit, il est à la fois vu d'en bas et vu de haut, par en-dessus. Double perspective contradictoire qui, on l'avouera, ne rend pas la position du spectateur très confortable. Un peu comme le crâne de *Pour finir encore*, à la fois vu de haut et vu par en-dessous. C'est dire qu'il n'y a pas ici de point de vue unifié du spectateur; rien à voir avec la position euclidienne classique du spectateur de tableau (et on sait l'importance des références picturales pour le théâtre de Beckett), ces lois de la perspective construites à la Renaissance à partir de la vision unifiée d'un œil immobile (triangulation linéaire de l'espace, point de perspective, lignes de fuite). Ici au contraire, l'œil bouge et nous sommes comme écartelés entre haut et bas, nous aussi suspendus dans l'espace, littéralement délogés de notre position de spectateurs centrés ("Je suis bien au centre?") Ici, le Souvenant, les didascalies le précisent, est "*un peu décentré*." Espace topologique et déformable, donc, fondé sur des notions de voisinage et d'enveloppement, indépendamment de toute échelle fixe de mesure… Non euclidien. Et nous-mêmes, lecteurs, lorsque nous lisons ce texte dans lequel un Souvenant entend monter de la bibliothèque la respiration des lecteurs et "les pages tournées," sommes-nous bien sûrs d'être à l'extérieur du texte et pas 'dans' le texte, tournant les pages de ce livre que nous sommes en train de lire?

C'est ce 'passage' constant du dehors au dedans, de l'intérieur à l'extérieur, d'une voix à l'autre, qui caractérise le fonctionnement de ce texte par glissements et échos. La notion de passage pourtant chez Bec-

kett est double, toujours. D'une part, il s'agit de jouer sur le passage comme incertitude (qui parle? où couper? quelle fois?), voire comme angoisse mais aussi, inversement comme jouissance, érotisation des limites, sensualité de la langue. L'acteur David Warrilow rappelle que dans *Solo* (*A Piece of Monologue*), à deux reprises, le récitant décrit le procédé buccal qui mène à la prononciation du mot *birth* (naissance): le positionnement de la langue, le bout entre les lèvres, une sensation douce, très sensuelle. Sa description, souligne-t-il, ressemble à celle d'une mise au monde. C'est pour cette raison que Beckett lui aurait dit: "je crois qu'il n'y aura jamais de version française pour ce texte, il n'y a que 'naissance' en français pour 'birth,' et le son 'th' n'existe pas" (cité dans Warrilow, 253). Pour finir, comme l'on sait, il a écrit une version française plus courte. C'est un des rares cas, souligne Warrilow, où il ait eu un problème de traduction.

Roland Barthes parlait d'une "écriture à haute voix," cette écriture vocale "que recommandait aussi Antonin Artaud," une écriture portée par ce que Barthes appelait "le *grain* de la voix," cherchant "le langage tapissé de peau, un texte où l'on puisse entendre le grain du gosier, la patine des consonnes, la volupté des voyelles, toute une stéréophonie de la chair profonde: l'articulation du corps" (104-05; Barthes souligne). Il y a bien en effet, dans l'écriture de Beckett, une indéniable volupté de l'articulation phonique, vocale, jaculatoire, une jouissance du 'passage' sans cesse rejoué du dedans au dehors, de l'intérieur à l'extérieur, de l'oralité, aussi n'est-ce guère un hasard si la bouche est promue au rang de personnage à part entière dans *Pas moi*. On connaît la référence de Molloy aux "sons purs, libres de toute signification" (74), ou encore, l'amour gourmand des mots qui sauve le vieux Krapp de la mort psychique dans *La dernière bande*: les sonorités de "viduité" ou "bobiiine," prononcées "avec délectation."

Par-delà l'angoisse, c'est aussi cette érotisation des limites que retraverse tout lecteur ou spectateur de *Cette fois*. Car il nous faut sans cesse, pour lire ce texte, rejouer la séparation. On sait ce que la psychanalyse peut nous dire de ce jeu avec les limites et je renvoie ici par exemple aux travaux d'Angela Moorjani. Le texte de *Cette fois*, en-deçà du trio des voix, est bien en effet une seule coulée verbale, un seul souffle rythmé par le bruit de la respiration du Souvenant ("*respiration audible, lente et régulière*"). À chaque fois il revient au lecteur de couper dans ce texte écrit sans ponctuation ni majuscules, de séparer les éléments du discours; et souvent on hésite, on ne sait pas exactement où couper, quelles limites tracer dans cette syntaxe indécise et mouvante

qu'invente Beckett, une syntaxe qui nous laisse comme irrésolus entre rétrospection (revenir en arrière pour relire) et prospection (il faut continuer… comme dit l'autre… avançons!). Autrement dit le sens, fragile, provisoire, ne se condense qu'un instant et il nous faut le saisir comme au vol, entre avant et après, passé et avenir, mémoire et invention. Ce qu'il nous fait expérimenter (plus qu'interpréter) avec Beckett c'est cela: le caractère provisoire et déformable des formes. Ainsi, dans ce passage (cela fonctionne mieux en anglais souvent): "never another after that never looked back after that was that the time…" où l'on hésite une seconde, se demandant où couper entre "that was" et "was that" ("after that was that the time") (1986b, 390): chiasme minuscule là encore, reproduisant en abyme celui du texte tout entier.

Ou encore, pour prendre deux exemples en français: "peut-être cette taule sur la mer où tu non là elle était avec toi" (12; where you no she was with you) – et ce dernier exemple où j'ai dû regarder la traduction en anglais parce que je ne comprenais pas ce que cela pouvait bien vouloir dire. C'est la voix B qui parle: "ou seul dans les mêmes scènes l'inventant ainsi histoire de tenir contenir le vide sur la pierre [...] seul au bout de la pierre avec les blés l'azur ou le halage seul sur le halage avec les mules fantômes et le rat noyé ou l'oiseau qui sait / bestiole quelconque au fil de l'eau s'en allant dans les feux du couchant" (19-20). J'avais d'abord lu "l'oiseau qui sait." Qui sait quoi? Avant de lire en anglais: "or bird or whatever it was floating" (etc.). Autrement dit: "ou l'oiseau / qui sait / bestiole quelconque."

Que signifie pour Beckett cette réflexion constante: être 'de passage,' dans un lieu provisoire, lieu sans lieu, intenable, instable. On peut naturellement en proposer une explication métaphysique ou religieuse: c'est le séjour provisoire au sens chrétien, nous sommes de passage sur cette terre, seul le séjour céleste est éternel. Soit. Il convient pourtant me semble-t-il d'y entendre un sens plus laïquement existentiel. Ce sujet qu'il nomme "éphectique" (dans *L'innommable*, on s'en souvient), c'est le sujet sans certitude, le sujet instable (celui du "je suis... peut-être"): pas le sujet rationnel, cartésien, de la certitude sensible, de l'affirmation de l'existence. On doute de tout avec Beckett et d'abord du monde et de l'existence. On n'y croit plus vraiment à tout cela: la vie, la mort, l'éternité, l'au-delà… D'où les échos qu'il éveille en nous, sa modernité. Cette incrédulité quant à la réalité de l'existence du monde et de soi, Beckett la partage avec quelques modernes mélancoliques. Ainsi Gilles Deleuze:

Le fait moderne, c'est que nous ne croyons plus en ce monde. Nous ne croyons même pas aux événements qui nous arrivent, l'amour, la mort, comme s'ils ne nous concernaient qu'à moitié. Ce n'est pas nous qui faisons du cinéma, c'est le monde qui nous apparaît comme un mauvais film […] C'est le lien de l'homme et du monde qui se trouve rompu. Dès lors, c'est ce lien qui doit devenir objet de croyance. Seul la croyance au monde peut relier l'homme à ce qu'il voit et entend […] Chrétiens ou athées, dans notre universelle schizophrénie *nous avons besoin de raisons de croire en ce monde*. C'est toute une conversion de la croyance.

<div align="right">(1985, 223-24; je souligne)</div>

Que veut dire: 'croire au lien?' Ce peut-être chez Beckett croire en cette fragile, ténue et pourtant increvable vitalité de l'écriture – ce fil sans cesse prêt de se rompre et pourtant sans cesse retissé ("il faut continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, [...] je vais continuer") (1953, 212). Épuisée et inépuisable force de résistance de l'écriture. Dans *Cette fois*, le moi éclate en âges distincts (l'enfance, l'âge mûr, la vieillesse) qui se juxtaposent, se chevauchent, se répondent en échos sans jamais se fondre, se réunir en une histoire. Ce qu'il met ici en scène, ce sont des éclats de temps sans centre, sans chronologie, mais qui coexistent et se relient de loin en loin, à distance. "À la limite…" comme l'on dit, pour suggérer qu'elle est toujours près de se rompre, 'il y a du lien.'

   Qu'est-ce que nous expérimentons alors, dans cette traversée de l'univers de Beckett, échappant avec lui à l'ordre ancien, celui de la croyance en la narration, cette histoire rétrospective qui serait la nôtre? Que nous sommes peut-être nous aussi faits de fragments mobiles provisoirement assemblés, constamment en voie de rassemblement et désassemblement. Rien à voir avec la condamnation biblique, via *l'Ecclésiaste* ("Tu es poussière et tu retourneras à la poussière"). Avec Beckett, nous ne sommes plus dans l'univers religieux ou dépressif de la Chute. La poussière est agitée d'infimes mouvements que l'écriture délie et relie inlassablement. Alors, le lisant, chacun devient un instant comme Watt, fait de millions de grains qui glissent ou tournent et restent en suspens dans l'air…

   La légèreté soudain de tout cela… non?

Notes

1.   Je renvoie à ce que j'ai développé dans *La défiguration*, 14-17.

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ILL SEEN ILL SAID AND THE JAPANESE SPATIAL CONCEPT *MA*

Masaki Kondo

Ill Seen Ill Said is symbolically similar to Noh drama through its pure, silent action that suggests a ghost. The person who is seen or ill seen may be a vision. The summer house is a vanishing point of time and space. The silence and immobility pursued in *Ill Seen Ill Said* are the culminating virtues of plays in the Noh tradition as outlined by Zéami, a Noh actor, dramatist and theorist. So too, the limited and unlimited world of time and space of *Ill Seen Ill Said,* like the face of a watch, is an image set between visibility and invisibility, which, in turn, is a *ma* of perception.

Beckett's late novella *Ill Seen Ill Said* can be understood as a work that has been distantly influenced by Japanese Noh drama, as it was transmitted to the European tradition through Ernest Fenollosa, Ezra Pound, and W. B. Yeats. Through its use of ritual action and slow movement and particularly through its use of *ma,* a silent short lapse of time between actions that is characteristic of Noh performance, the novella realizes the effect that is aimed at in Noh.

The Chinese character for *ma* can mean 'between' when used as a preposition. In Japanese life and culture, *ma* is the basic concept of both physical and temporal space. It is the space between two things, originally the space between the two pillars that framed the entrance ways to Japanese wooden structures. *Ma* also means the length (*ken*) of about six feet between two pillars; one square *ken* used to be a unit of space (a *tsubo* which is equivalent to two tatami mats), and three square *ken*s (*kokonoma*), the standard space for a room in the palace of an emperor or an aristocrat in the *Heian* era (from the ninth to the twelfth century), is the typical space of a Noh stage (Kojiro, 18-26, 129-41; see figure 1). On the other hand, *ma* as a temporal term means a pause in speech, or a brief interval between phases or actions in Japanese traditional music, dance, and drama, and as such it has further come to mean rhythm and tempo.

Even if Beckett had no direct contact with the Japanese concept of *ma* through Zen and Noh, it is very likely that, consciously or unconsciously, he understood its essential aspects through the plays of W. B. Yeats that were deeply influenced by Japanese Noh. As John Montague, who was a close friend of Beckett, has commented, there were passages from *At the Hawk's Well* that never failed to move Beckett (see Bair, 527). Just as certain lines from Yeats's "The Tower" long lived in Beckett's memory, so did *At the Hawk's Well* along with Synge's *The Well of the Saints*. Beckett's deep familiarity with Yeats's poems and plays should not be underestimated: some of what Yeats inherited from Fenollosa and Pound's English translations of Noh plays must also have impressed the young Beckett's imagination with the possibilities for, and the concept behind, empty time and space on stage. These infiltrated Beckett's sense of time and space when he composed his ghostly television plays and the later short prose narratives.[1]

I would like to trace the sense of *ma* in *Ill Seen Ill Said* with particular reference to *At the Hawk's Well*, which is the firmest link between Beckett's imagination and the world of Noh. In the opening of the play, musicians sing: "I call to the eye of the mind / A well long choked up and dry / And boughs long stripped by the wind" (Yeats, 207). The eye of the mind sees the unreal, that is, the pictures of memory or imagination (see Armstrong, 89-135). Here it is a well from an ancient time that is conjured up and brought onto the stage. Yeats's Noh play represents the unreal called up from the past, and the passage of time from the past to the present and on to eternity is temporally realized on stage. The performance involves calling a legend to the eye of the mind of an audience. An old man has watched for water to well up for fifty years in vain. The water never fails to plash when he falls asleep, yet his awakened eye of flesh never sees the water flow, only the wetness of the stones and leaves. The short interval of his sleep, under the spell of the well's guardian, prevents him from seeing the truth revealed. Yet this *ma*, this brief interval, expresses the core of the drama, disclosing the essence of a thing as the object of an unfailing desire in the mind in the absence of perception.

Various forms of *ma* are evident in *Ill Seen Ill Said*: the transition between two kinds of eyes, the repetition of the disappearance and reappearance of the old woman, the sudden gap of time between past and present, the failing light, the intense gazing till the immobile object of the gaze starts to tremble, the progression from the trace of an illusion

to a place where all traces are absent. These transitional blanks of time signal the void, which the audience is expected to perceive with the eye of their mind, prompted by that of the author.

The old woman appearing intermittently in the cabin or in the pastures in Beckett's *Ill Seen Ill Said* is the object of "the eye of flesh" (56) as well as of the eye of the mind or the anonymous eye. The anonymous eye in the text may be the eye of the author imagining and devising it all; it is a sign of his looking into his mind and choosing words for what he sees. But the suddenness of her disappearances and reappearances, sometimes after an interval of a year, indicates that her image is not obsessively present to the eye. Instead, it is an intermittent vision that is located between perception and illusion. The abrupt appearances and disappearances of her figure suggest how fragmentary the memory of the seer is. The mind's eye has lapses like those of the light of the moon and stars in the text. Even though seeing is being for Beckett, the anonymous eye's vision is not continuously, but rather desultorily connected to the old woman's, with abrupt disconnections. This irregularity and unreliability are not only owing to physical phenomena but reflect the fragility of human perception.

The parallels between the old woman's eye of flesh and the author's eye of the mind involve a come-and-go between the perception of the real and the vision of the unreal. The interval between the two forms of perception is no more than a line of text or the blink of an eye. The resulting blankness, a silent lapse of time while the eye is closed, suggests *ma*, the brief interval of a few seconds after a cessation of action, sound or speech, which is a full, tense moment of the realization of mind, or *kokoro*, in the performance of a Noh play. In Noh, this *ma*, a brief interval of immobility or silence, is put in as a pause at the end of a speech or as an immobilized posture after an action, which could be filled with the silenced sound of a flute or a drum. It represents reverence for the fate of man or woman as well as for the laws of Nature.

The transition from the eye of the mind to that of flesh is an interval comparable to the lapse of time that takes place when the guardian of the Hawk's Well gazes at the old man with the eyes of a hawk and dances. The old man falls asleep for the time during which the well is wet and temporarily becomes a fountain of eternal life. But actually the well is an object of endless desire and hope only because it is always dry when the old man is awake to see it. *Ma* here is a sort of shadow of a thing wherein the unseen thing is projected from the mind's eye in an "ill-seen" manner, to use a Beckettian expression. Such projection sug-

gests the relation between a photographic image and its real subject. Whether the vision is the perception of a real object or a projection of the mind is the enigma that haunts Beckett's novella which, in its fragmentary recollection of symbolic phases of life, intermixes elements of real life with imaginary figments, or, in Beckett's words, "the confusion now between real and – how say its contrary?" He does not name "its contrary" or "the counter-poison," but only says "Such now the confusion between them once so twain. And such the farrago from eye to mind" (72).

Although some of Beckett's concerns in his novella overlap with Michel Foucault's "words and things" and with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception, what distinguishes *Ill Seen Ill Said* is its theme of "the eye of flesh" and "the eye of the mind." The verbal art of Beckett, who engaged so heavily with the visual arts, exploits the interplay of the eye and the mind, which cannot be limited to the relation between the real and the imaginary. For his seemingly real object, the old woman, is, after all, the product of the narrator or deviser's mind, either through his memory or his imagination. The method of composition is the same as in a normal work of fiction, but with the following difference: the narrator's projective activity, here the act of saying or ill saying, is frequently interrupted by the author's indications, which resemble those of a director or a prompter in the theatre. Thus, the author is represented as a prompter of the narrator, while questions and answers are traded between the author and the narrator, leading the whole verbal work towards decomposition. These performances of the author on the 'stage' of his fictions are temporally ordered toward the imagined end of his life, which gives them the air of a sacred progress on a path to martyrdom — martyrdom in quest of literary truth, be it the void after all.

Blank spaces of time and discontinuities of action often appear in Beckett's works, which frequently consist of series of fragments. Indeed, such discontinuities were a characteristic device within literary modernism, and James Joyce was one of Beckett's predecessors in the use he made of it. Significantly, Joyce, like Beckett, was deeply interested in film and loved music, both temporal arts, whereas, unlike Beckett, Joyce was not interested in painting and sculpture. Joyce and Beckett used techniques analogous to the editing of cinematic images, and Beckett, in addition, made use of visual images from painting and sculpture in composing both his prose works and his plays. The persistence of time and the intermittence of visual images are the two poles of

Beckett's world. Cosmic time is cut into repetitive but slowly changing filmic images, on the one hand, and it is internalized within a character's mortal body and carried towards the dark, on the other.

The action of the old woman in the cabin or in the pastures and the movement of her eyes are linked to the passage of time like the hand of a clock. Once she gazes at a thing, it begins to react to her eyes with a trembling, as if time were animating it. However, this trembling is not the resurrection of life in Beckett as the trickling of water is in Yeats, but the irreversible moving on to the void. Beyond expression, the void is nevertheless made palpable in Beckett as is *ma* in Noh drama. Such a blank space of time bears not the emptiness but the fullness of existence, such as one experiences in the supreme moments of silence in Shakespeare's plays or in Anton Chekhov's or Maxim Gorky's dramas in the tradition of the Moscow Art Academic Theatre.

Motokiyo Zéami, the master of *Noh*, set down in *Kakyo* ("The Mirror of the Flower") the essence of his theory of Noh: "Showing no action is a virtue" (427). This is an excellent definition of *ma,* which Noh involves in its truest and most practical sense:

> Showing no action means a pause between actions, or keeping on. Why the pause is a virtue is because the mind carefully works to fill in the pause between actions. It is the work of the inner mind to keep the mind watchful, paying full attention to every point of movement and sound in dancing, singing, mimicking words and gestures, and all kinds of performance. When the full, inner mind gives off an aura of art, a supreme presentation is achieved.
>
> (427-28)

Another axiom of Zéami's concerns *myo,* the perfection of a performance beyond expression and thought: "The essence of *myo* is a formless form, a pure state of nothing beyond form" (429).

Ill Seen Ill Said is composed of the slow action and movement of the old woman, and has an atmosphere of illusion reminding us of a Noh play. Even a mask, a symbolic image of *ma*, is indicated in this work to suggest the invisible and immobilized passage of time. Beckett writes, describing a flagstone at the old woman's doorstep: "Calm slab worn and polished by agelong comings and goings. […] How serene it seems this ancient mask" (62). Her face reflects light from the slab. The mask of the flagstone without a wrinkle gives an ancient echo to her worn eyes, filling them with a trickle of tears, which is a faint hint of

life. Here we see a mask of flesh facing one of stone, as if for the newly dead. A moment of time passes from the eyes of the flesh to the lidded eyes of an ancient memory with no sound or voice. Only the dim light between the sinking sun and the coming moon envelopes their silent confrontation before she disappears. The incalculable *ma* of Beckett in the gap between flesh and mind abruptly brings the action to an end and leaves the audience to reflect on the two kinds of eye. The eye, either of flesh or mind, is a well of life personified by the old woman's eyes that are ultimately reduced to two black blanks, the "fit vent holes of the soul" (85). And the opaque skylights reappear to shed only blackness, opening like the transformed eyes of flesh and mind onto a dark world. "Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness" are the final words of this novella. Illumination is gone and finally no trace of the illusion, even of the old woman's face, is left, except a void, which is happiness.

Notes

1.   For other discussions of Beckett, Yeats, and Noh, see Katharine Worth (1978, 48-71, 158-93); Yasunari Takahashi (1982, 66-73; 1986, 172-76; 2003, 171-93, 199-220, 221-27); and Masaru Sekine,

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Fig. 1 The Kimpu-jinja Shrine in the Kii-Mountain Range, Nara, Japan
Founded before 710, this shrine in honor of the god of Mt. Kimpu was
rebuilt in the early 20th century after a fire. It is now a UNESCO World
Heritage site. The stage is a typical *kokonoma*, measuring three square
ma (*ken*), and is used to stage ritual dances on the deity's feast day. The
spaces between the pillars correspond to the original sense of *ma*, with
the central gateway leading to the sanctuary located on top of the stone
stairs.
Photograph by Masaki Kondo

WATT'S WAYS:
Addenda, Borders and Courses

Garin Dowd

While the theme of loss of spatio-temporal coordinates is pervasive in the late prose of Beckett, *Watt* is already notable for the emphasis it places on dislocation. In particular, there is already evidence of what will later become a more distilled attention to the unstable threshold between interior and exterior that can be said to define the architectural itself.

> He met no human being, on his way.
> Beckett, *Watt*
>
> C'est là, *entre*, que nous habitons, toujours sur la brèche, glissants et vacillants.
> Benoît Goetz, *La dislocation*

Any consideration of a putative borderlessness of Beckett must negotiate, even if to transcend, or to render traversable, borders and hinterlands operative within the exegesis convened in his name.[1] The *pagus*, as described by Jean-François Lyotard in the context of his *Instructions païennes*, pertains to the hinterlands of towns (*bourgs*); it is a zone where truth cedes its place to metaphor, falsehood and metamorphosis (Lyotard, 43). Its opposite, the *domus*, is precisely that which escapes many of Beckett's characters, who, like Watt before he takes up his abode in the Knott household inhabit the periphery, not the centre (1976, 39). Thus for Beckett's wayfarers the journey is often reduced to that paradoxical mode of displacement which Beckett, in his early short story "Ding-Dong," calls "gression" (1974, 36). In terms of trajectories such as that of Belacqua, once he "toed the line and began to relish the world" (35), toward communication and relation conducted under the abiding sign of restlessness, *Watt* represents a more comprehensive

study. Indeed one of the addenda in *Watt* may be regarded as a taxonomy of the novel's many 'ways':

> Watt will not
> abate one jot
> but of what
>
> of the coming to
> of the being at
> of the going from
> Knott's habitat
>
> of the long way
> of the short stay
> of the going back home
> the way he had come
>
> [...]
>
> that is of what
> Watt will not
> abate one jot
>
> (250)

The poem, like many of its neighbouring fragments, enters into insistent dialogue with a range of literary, philosophical and critical texts. One of these, as hinted at in the repetition of "jot" is Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* with its joining of the horizons of writing and the written artifact. The refusal or inability of Watt and thereby of *Watt* to abate one jot, to cease being written, is analogous to Proust's 'careering' trajectory from *pavé* to tome in *Le temps retrouvé*. Like *Watt*, Proust's novel is concerned with paths and not only with *côtés*, but with the entire gamut of ways, habits among them, as Beckett attests in his 1931 study. Watt does not have at his disposal a Méséglise way and a Guermantes way. There is only the path to and from the Knott household, albeit littered with obstacles that give rise to a series of encounters in which his body is subjected to a range of sensory experiences, some of them painful (as in his encounter with the porter; 22), some pleasurable (as when, in his going, he is detained by a "pendulous umbel" and "the drag, to and fro, to and fro, of the tassels, on

the crown, of his hat"; 222), and to some of which he is indifferent, as if he were not fully sentient or in full possession of his faculties, as suggested by Mr. Hackett (17). Despite such dalliances, allied as they are to the duplication, doubling-back and pervasive instability of coordinates and coordination that are in force in the novel, Watt's way leads 'to' and 'from' a refuge (and asylum, if, as some have suggested, the Knott household and the asylum are one and the same.) This way manifests a 'careering' toward, as well as an apprenticeship to, narration and narrative (achieved in the meeting face to face with Sam on the bridge). Just as Beckett casts Proust's as a trajectory toward *defunctus* (1987, 93), so also is Watt's way in some sense negative, toward emptiness or emptying (cf. Ackerley, 200). Watt's way in the dark, on the path, in this respect may be said to bear comparison with Heidegger's characterisation of how *Dasein* is the orienteering message bearer (not abating one jot) who "walks the boundary of the boundless" (1971, 41), but for whom on its way "darkness surrounds the path" (49). An initially less promising intertextual echo is provided by the mention of AE (George Russell). There are two references to his *Homeward, Songs by the Way* (1894), a book which Mr Case is reading (1976, 227) and which, in a break with his habit, he is carrying with him when he encounters the stricken Watt, thereby facilitating the scraping away from Watt's face of "a little mire" (241). While this deployment of the book may reflect Beckett's opinion of its author and his works, the fact that the maltreated volume concerns many ways, highways and byways (AE, 31, 35, 60, 61) nonetheless suggests that Beckett may have selected it in order to echo his own novel's concern with paths.[2]

The making of paths; wayfaring; the adopting of ways; the following of routes; the making of one's way in life; succession: the range of modes of traversal, transport, displacement, advance and retreat in *Watt* is prodigious. In another echo of the *Recherche*, "now the fields flew by, the hedges and the ditches, ghastly in the train's light, or appeared to do so, for in reality it was the train that moved, across a land for ever still" (26). Habitation takes its place within this general *cheminement*. In his study of architecture and philosophy, Benoît Goetz asserts that in its manner of regulating the play of spaces – by creating separations, openings, thresholds, passages, superimpositions, enclosures and interpenetrations – architecture itself is a mode of "dis-location" (182). Goetz's thinking of the architectural shares something with the turn in architectural theory broadly identified as deconstructionist. The decentering, dislocation and abeyance of unity in such thinking is re-

flected in his own deployment of the concept of dislocation. Turning Heidegger's thinking about dwelling 'against' itself, Goetz situates architecture between 'habitation' and 'inhabitation.' To inhabit, from this perspective, is to reside (or to be immured, paradoxically) in *atopia*.

Stations and Trajectories

With its house, station, pavilion, garden (but also the cardinal points north, south, east and west, and position in lineage), and between them mobile and/or 'trajective' (to employ the phrase of Paul Virilio) locations of narration (tram, bus, stairs, door, path, track, ditch, hedge, bridge, *couloir*, and *curricula vitae*), *Watt*'s is an eminently human terrain. (This includes, as Begam asserts, the terrain of philosophical logic in its "premises" and "grounds"; 77). The encroachment of flora and fauna upon this terrain (notably from the ditch bordering the road) only serves to remind us that the animal is not itself capable of what Georg Simmel called "the miracle of the road" (171). Indeed Simmel's succinct typology of spatial articulation in his seminal study "Bridge and Door" provides a possible frame of reference for a study of *Watt*'s ways. Bridge and door are two key architectural features in *Watt*, especially in the asylum chapter. On the "rustic bridge [...] in a state of extreme dilapidation," Watt and Sam come face to face, enabling the narrative (152). The encounter on the bridge, or the occurrence of bridging, puts into play the transformation of an "epistemological process into a narrative process, one in which Watt relates his story to Sam, who in turn relates it to the reader" (Begam, 84). According to Simmel, whereas the bridge "prescribes unconditioned security and direction, life flows forth out of the door from the limitation of isolated separate existence into the limitlessness of all possible directions" (173).[3] For Simmel, if human beings seek an analogue in the world of architecture and building they will find they have less in common with the bridge than they have with the door, for they are to be defined in terms of limitlessness: "the human being is likewise the bordering creature that has no border" (174).

In order to get our bearings in *Watt* there are perhaps few more initially promising, but ultimately disorienting, places to turn than to the abstract painting in Erskine's room, the circular form at the centre of which is said to have been "obviously described by a compass" (126). Faced with this artefact, Watt eventually concludes that it is not a "stable member of the edifice," but rather a "term in a series" (129). On

his way to this conclusion Watt ponders the effect of the possible rotation of the circle by means of a repositioning of the picture: "Watt wondered how his picture would look upside down, with the point west and the breach north, or on its right side, with the point north and the breach east, or on its left side, with the point south and the breach west" (128). At any event, having explored the possibilities, Watt decides that the breach should remain as he came to first find it: "It is by the nadir that we come, said Watt, and it is by the nadir we go" (128). The collapsing here of anatomy (prepared for by the account of the birth of Larry Nixon in chapter 1), metaphysics and geography to produce a conclusion is testament to the haphazardness of the direction of Watt's thinking, a point underscored by the immediate appending to his conclusion of the phrase "whatever that means." The question of navigation according to cardinal points, compasses (of either sort) and by means of recourse to conventional map-making and reading, then, takes its place in the taxonomy of *Watt*'s ways. To return to the 'birth' of Watt from the nadir as it is signposted in chapter 1, the folly of turning back too soon "before he was well started on his way," explains Mr. Hackett to Mr. Nixon apropos of Watt's foolish "course" (19). At the conclusion of their exchange of information and in their enduring puzzlement as to Watt's ways – his trajectories and conduits as much as his conducts – Mr. Hackett is fixed to the spot as he contemplates the horizon: "Now it was quite dark. Yes, now the western sky was as the eastern, which was as the southern, which was as the northern" (22). Watt in his coming, here, as in his going, in one of the addenda (249), is 'mired' in a perceptual continuum rather than 'immured' by contours, walls, boundaries or borders. The scene thus 'set,' a minor catastrophe befalls Watt as he makes a less mediated way into the narrative (being, in this instant, for Begam "figuratively born" after a series of reflections on sex and reproduction) (85-86).

Point of View from the Ditch
Following the collision with the porter (22), Watt succeeds, despite his detainment, in continuing "on his way, or in his station" (30). Then, after some progress, feeling weak, "he left the crown of the road and sat down on the path, which was high, and edged with thick neglected grass" (31). Watt of course is not content with this position; no sooner than thus stationed, he is to be found half in the road and half on the path. This position also enables him to enjoy the feeling of "cool damp grasses of the ditch's edge" on his neck (31). It is once he has fully

shifted himself to a position in the ditch rather than merely abutting onto it that the song, delivered by "voices, indifferent in quality, of a mixed choir" (32), comes to him. Thus rapt, in a world of the animal and vegetal which, though it borders them does not 'know' roads or ways, Watt abates. His detention by the song soon gives way to the pressure of an imminent departure, for by this point he has already grown tired of the ditch. Reposing in a ditch, for Watt, necessarily involves perceptions of the sky and the earth – two elements for which Watt has a pronounced disdain (34).[4] He thus departs emboldened "with confidence and with awe also, for the chimneys of Mr. Knott's house were visible at last, in the light of the moon" (34).

Although Watt is apt to stray from his course and to leave the road for its borders, thereby entering into or at least bordering on (in the case of farm animals, with the notable exception of the "strayed ass, or goat" [222]) the tempo and terrain of the animal, the engagement in and with the ditch is in this instance, short lived, and any suspicion that his is a Rousseauian (or, for that matter, Keatsian) contract is quickly dispelled. His liaison with the ditch is his last chance at a habitation alternative to that promised by his imminent entry into the household of Mr. Knott. Despite his trajectory, or a 'pilgrimage' along "the spiraling contours of the Purgatorial Mount" (Begam, 72), being determined, or at least sustained, by the emergence of an architectural form signalling a way and an itinerary as well as a career ("All the old ways led to this, all the old windings, the stairs [...], the steps, the fever of shortest ways [...], the wild country roads […], all the exitus and redditus, closed and ended. All led to this [...]"; 38), the facet that keeps Watt in abeyance from real estate is once more in evidence when he fails to have apodictic knowledge of the manner of his entry into that establishment. The house, or "solid edifice," has the quality of *muralité*; it enjoys verticality and fixity. Moreover it is coordinated with its environs, being located in a network of facilities such as plumbing, electrical power and water supply, postal and milk deliveries, to which list one must of course add (the sooner of course to take them away again) the Galls father and son (65-66). The Knott household is located in a network of ways, and thus affords Watt the disposition to remember to remain upright, to acknowledge zones which belong to him, boundaries which define him, roles which are his, ways of coming, going and being, to reprise the terms in which Beckett envisioned the sections of his novel.

Compass

> And so they stayed a little while, Mr Case and Mr Nolan looking
> at Mr Gorman, and Mr Gorman looking straight before him, at
> nothing in particular, though the sky falling to the hills, and the
> hills falling to the plain, made as pretty a picture, in the early
> morning light, as a man could hope to meet with, in a day's march.
> (246)

In a train station located along a north-west and south-east axis, along
which Watt plans to depart, three employees arrest their departures,
exchange looks from their positions before one who must be facing east
gazes at nothing in particular (and the nothing is important), failing to
notice the early morning sun or that which it illumines, which in *Murphy*'s terms would be the "nothing new" (1973, 5), also the 'nothing
anew,' in the early morning light: "The sun was now well above the
visible horizon. Mr Gorman, Mr Case and Mr Nolan turned their faces
towards it, as men will, in the early morning, without heeding. The road
lay still, at this hour, leaden, deserted, between its hedges, and its
ditches" (245).

   We are on the edges of the novel, in its ditches, or ditch, in the
addenda. As the novel reports, it is in *Watt* always a matter of being
either in the midst or on the perimeter (39). The novel, considered as
domus to the *pagus* of the addenda, ends in a location suggestive of
dislocation. Watt, having purchased a ticket but whose departure goes
unreported, is 'followed' by the goat disappearing "beyond the rise"
(245). Irrespective of the manner or trajectory of Watt's unreported
departure, the goat can be said to follow Watt's course. This borderland
emissary is viewed as it progresses, from the vantage of the train station, with its officials static in a skewed cardinal grid. The cardinal
point 'east' has been vacated by Watt ("the long wet dream with the hat
and bags" according to Mr. Nolan [246]), as far as visibility from the
station is concerned, but may be said to be occupied by his *suivant*, the
goat.

   To look 'eastward,' according to Western conventions of reading,
is also to look from left to right (cf. Ackerley, 129-30), and therefore at
the addenda. There are other fragments in this border that enter into
thematic relation with the addendum concerning Watt's ways, of which
space permits only brief mention. One of these – already noted above –
describes Watt in relation to an expanse described as "the waste" from

which he is indistinguishable, both he and that which lies before him are said to be of the same dark colour "so dark as to defy identification as such" (249). Unlike the bowl of Mr. Knott, as described in another of the addenda, Watt himself in this terrain cannot be located. The expanse itself does not seem to have boundaries or any reference points other than above and below, or at least does not for Watt. The possibility that there is something other than waste and sky is "not felt by Watt" (249), and even the waste does not hold its expansive position: "Beneath Watt the waste rose and fell," while the same is true of the sky. If Watt was, within this flux, "rooted to the spot" it is of course a quite paradoxical state of anchorage, reminiscent of the predicament of Belacqua in "Ding-Dong." He is mired (perhaps in Cartesian doubt without the deity as suggested by Rabinovitz) rather than immured.[5]

Sand

Leaving behind a life of "superficial loitering" in order to embrace one of "disinterested endeavour" (39): this is what Watt believes he has obtained upon taking up residency in the Knott household. The result is that he must stay and abide. Watt sits on the door step. In a conclusion which echoes that of Simmel in respect of doors, the door step for Watt is "a conjuncture of one's courses" (41). No sooner has this promise of abiding taken shape, no sooner has the 'gathering' dimension of the architectural impressed itself upon him, than step gives way or slips to slippage itself: "Gliss-iss-iss-STOP" (41). In *Watt* dimension, scale and orientation – all the requisites for a good little terrestrial who might aspire to finding his way, to follow his *chemin* – do not have much purchase. To adapt the words of Goetz, Watt is always on/in the breach, sliding and vacillating (179). This would seem to confirm the insight of Michel de Certeau when he states that the limit does the opposite of what it says: "when it marks a stopping place, the latter is not stable but follows the variations of encounters between programs. Boundaries are transportable limits and transportations of limits; they are also metaphorai" (129).

'Evening Land'

Watt has frequently been positioned in the contexts both of the Romantic revision of the myth of the fall and of a pursuit of nothingness. It is tempting therefore, in the light of the observations above, to consider *Watt* in relation to the thought of Heidegger whose perspective on the matter to a degree represents a synthesis of these 'courses' or ways. In

On the Way to Language (1959), Heidegger makes the characteristically utopian plea: "An open region that holds the promise of a dwelling and provides a dwelling is what we call a 'land'" (194). Elsewhere in the same volume, in the "Dialogue between a Japanese and an Inquirer," he announces to his imagined Japanese interlocutor (based on Kuki Shūzō) that he comes from the 'Evening Land' – a literal translation of the German *Abendland*, that is, the 'occident' – where the sun's descent or decline is for Heidegger that of the West itself in its fall into inauthenticity. Writing under the inspiration of Heidegger, William Spanos argues that *Watt* belongs to the category of works that "simultaneously destroy[s] the received forms (and their rhetorics)." These forms, which are "recognised as agencies of the general will to power deeply inscribed in the Western mind," are subject in novels such as *Watt* to possibilities that he reflects upon under the heading 'occasion' (xii). Deriving from *occasus* ('the setting of the sun'), and from the ablative form of *cadere* ('to fall,' 'to drop,' as of the setting of the heavenly bodies, and 'to fall,' 'to perish,' 'to die'), Beckett's prose, according to Spanos, may be regarded as taking the form of the "eccentric measure of mortality or, in Heidegger's rhetoric, of 'dwelling' in the context of mortality." Another etymological root of 'occasion' is *occidere*, which means both 'to fall,' especially 'to set' or 'to wester' as in the case of the 'movement' of the sun, and 'to die,' 'to perish,' from the present participle of which – *occidens* – the English word 'occident' derives (xiv).

With its three dawns, taken in tandem with the many others in Beckett's body of work, from "The Expelled" to *Ohio Impromptu*, to mention but two, an eastward gaze can be said to dominate *Watt* and to reinforce the possibility of placing the novel as a whole under the sign of one cardinal point. Perhaps it is far from incidental that Watt's manner of walking is exemplified by his adoption of a course due-east (28). The last living being observed on the *chemin* is a goat, perhaps related to the one, if indeed it is a goat and not an ass, who returns Watt's gaze, or at least does so by virtue of the narrative aporia created by Sam's fabulation, as he makes his way to the station. This ditch-dwelling animal follows Watt's way into the breach where with him it will no doubt continue in its station, oscillating and vacillating. This procession into the liminal space so preponderant in Beckett's writing of the middle period is undertaken by two ditch-dwellers. For such denizens the architectural is not, however, despite their common eastward course, *pace* Heidegger, the emblem of unity and gathering. The chimney illumi-

nated by the moon that precipitated Watt's rising from the ditch and his depositing in the *domus* of Mr. Knott in chapter 1 is unable, in the final chapter, to make itself seen despite the "fineness" of the nights for which "this part of the country" is "reputed" (224), and despite, moreover, the moonlight's embellishment of Watt's consideration of the attractions of the "permanent way" (223). Not for Watt, nor for his *suivant*, the gathering in the fourfold of earth, sky, divinities and mortals that organises Heidegger's *Feldweg* (362). That way, Watt's way is, after all, toward the breach – the "openings through which fiction admits its own unlikely creations" (Begam, 93) – the *pagus*, in effect the novel's own internal 'ditch': the addenda themselves.

Notes

1.   The epigraph by Goetz is on page 179: "It is there, *between*, that we live, always on the breach, sliding and vacillating" (emphasis in the original; my translation).

2.   AE's book is referred to only by the second part of its title in *Watt*.

3.   On the bridge, generally, as spatial articulation contrasted with the limit, see also de Certeau (126-29).

4.   It is from a ditch that the goat emerges in the final chapter. Although the goat makes its way – "hesitated, in the middle of the road, then turned away. The clatter came fainter and fainter, down the still air, and came still faintly when the pale had disappeared, beyond the rise" (245) – neither it nor its fellow animals make roads in Simmel's sense. Arguably *Watt* seems to agree that the great analogy identified by Goetz has ceased to organise relations between terrestrial and extraterrestrial.

5.   For Rabinovitz, Watt is "mired in a pool of doubt" (127).

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LITTÉRATURE ET PHILOSOPHIE :
VOIX ET IMAGES EN QUESTION

"MAIS QUELLE EST CETTE VOIX?"

Bruno Clément

In this article I take up the question Blanchot asked in 1969 – "What voice is this?" – about *Comment c'est* and attempt to extend its significance. Voice is considered here one of the two essential figures in Beckett's work (the other being the image). My hypothesis is that for Beckett the voice is an irreducible figure by means of which he seeks to say something about the inherent doubleness of all esthetic production and indeed all utterance. This thematics permits me to compare Beckett to contemporary writers and philosophers and to propose a new criterion for distinguishing between literature and philosophy.

La question est difficile. C'est Maurice Blanchot qui la pose, dans *L'entretien infini*, à la fin d'un chapitre important où il est longuement question de Beckett, mais où il est aussi, à propos de *Comment c'est*, également question d'un autre et mystérieux objet. C'est cet autre objet que je me propose, à mon tour, d'approcher. En relisant quelques textes, en méditant quelques tentatives de Beckett. En me servant aussi des indications, des hypothèses, des certitudes et des doutes de Blanchot.

Cette "autre chose," Blanchot la nomme le plus souvent "la voix." Mais ce nom est essayé faute d'un autre à la recherche duquel toute son œuvre est consacrée. Le mot n'est employé que sous forme interrogative "Quelle est cette voix?" (1969, 486). Et le titre du chapitre sous lequel l'objet cherche à se subsumer ne comporte pas le mot 'voix': "Les paroles doivent cheminer longtemps." Les quelques lignes où figurent ces mots m'aideront à camper le décor théorique très général, et donc très relatif, qui me permettra de lire ces textes où Beckett parle de la voix:

—Pourquoi [l'auteur] ne parle-t-il pas directement?
—Parce que, j'imagine, il ne peut pas parler directement: il n'y a pas de parole directe en littérature.
—Ce serait donc une première justification de ce mouvement: le rappel simple que la littérature, qui est peut-être sans vérité, est

pourtant la seule vérité de l'auteur. Entre celui-ci et ce qui est dit, il y a un écart qu'il faut rendre sensible. Les paroles doivent cheminer longtemps.

(Blanchot 1969, 479)

La voix serait donc, dans une première approximation, la manière qu'aurait imaginée Beckett pour "rendre sensible" l'écart le séparant de ce qu'il dit. Avant d'entrer dans le détail des textes, et de me hasarder à reconstituer à ma façon l'histoire de la voix dans cette œuvre, je veux faire remarquer la forme très insolite que Blanchot a choisi de donner à son interrogation. Il faut prendre ici à la lettre le titre du livre dont sont extraites ces considérations, *L'entretien infini*. Il importe grandement que le livre de Blanchot poursuive son interrogation sous une forme qui lui soit adéquate: en somme une manière de performativité. Le dialogue, sur lequel il a lui-même tellement réfléchi est d'emblée donné comme un artifice, mais cet artifice ne renvoie évidemment à aucune tricherie, à aucun subterfuge; il met seulement en œuvre ce qui est en question, à savoir un écart essentiel et mystérieux, qui ne se donne précisément à entendre que dans quelques configurations remarquables – Blanchot dirait, je crois, que l'ensemble de ces configurations est la littérature. C'est ainsi du moins qu'il lit Beckett; et si je ne le lis pas tout à fait comme lui, je reconnais que c'est lui qui m'aide aujourd'hui à donner à cette question de la voix et du dédoublement sa portée la plus générale. Car il n'y a voix, ou intrusion de la voix, que parce qu'il y a dédoublement – écart si l'on veut; et la littérature n'est peut-être que l'un des lieux où ce dédoublement cherche à se dire et, se disant, à se penser.

Je tiens donc pour acquis, même si je n'évoque que quelques-uns des textes de Beckett, que pourraient être aussi convoqués, pour répondre à la lancinante question de *L'entretien infini* "Mais quelle est cette voix?", tous les textes dialogués de Beckett, et donc, tout son théâtre (je suis sensible dans *Fin de partie*, qui semble pourtant si éloignée de cela, aux nombreuses et précises didascalies sur la voix: voix blanche de Clov, "voix normale" ou "voix de narrateur" de Nagg, ou de Hamm, entre autres).

J'insiste à présent, brièvement, sur la vraisemblance troublante de la thèse de Blanchot appliquée à l'œuvre de Beckett. Le premier obstacle à une lecture sereine, transparente, de cette œuvre, tout critique même novice le sait, est l'omniprésence de cet "écart," auquel Beckett donne tant de formes différentes. J'en énumère rapidement quelques-

unes, si familières au lecteur beckettien qu'il oublierait presque leur étrangeté: écart entre les mots ("au cirque, au music-hall, au cirque," "de relaxation, de circumduction, de relaxation," "de feuilles, de cendres, de feuilles," "elles murmurent, elles bruissent, elles murmurent");[1] écart entre un mot et lui-même (le mot 'pot' par exemple, dans *Watt*); écart entre deux moments très rapprochés mais distincts (c'est sur cet écart que repose le rendez-vous presque manqué de Mercier et Camier au début du roman qui raconte leur voyage); écart entre deux personnages très ressemblants, "aussi ressemblants que possible" disent souvent les didascalies (dans *Impromptu d'Ohio*, dans *Quad*, entre autres); écart entre deux noms de personne (Bam, Bem, Bim, Bom; Mercier/Camier, May/Amy, Willy/Winnie, etc.); écart entre la version anglaise et la version française d'un texte; écart entre un texte et le commentaire, par le narrateur même, de ce texte; écart entre les deux actes des pièces (*En attendant Godot, Oh les beaux jours, Comédie*); écart entre la première et la seconde partie d'un récit (*Sans*); écart entre les deux parties d'une phrase (sur le modèle, si fréquent dans *Watt*, "non que…, loin de là…, mais enfin…"; écart entre la première et la deuxième personne du singulier; ou entre la première et la troisième, et ainsi de suite.

Quel est donc l'écart que signale ou dont témoigne la voix? Le texte cité de *L'entretien infini* ne souffle mot de la voix. Il parle seulement du rôle et de la fonction critiques. C'est très insensiblement (et évidemment pas par hasard) que Blanchot passe de la critique à la lecture puis de la lecture à l'écriture – et à la voix. Car lire, au fond, c'est plutôt entendre:

> —Le mot entendre, pour cet acte d'approche, conviendrait mieux que le mot lire. Derrière les mots qui se lisent, comme avant les mots qui s'écrivent, il y a une voix déjà inscrite, non entendue et non parlante, et l'auteur est, auprès de cette voix, à égalité avec le lecteur: tous deux, presque confondus, cherchant à la reconnaître.
> —Oui, et ainsi se trouve justifiée, dans le cas de Beckett, la disparition de tout signe qui ne serait signe que pour l'œil. Ici, ce n'est plus la puissance de voir qui est requise: il faut renoncer au domaine du visible et de l'invisible, à ce qui se représente, fût-ce négativement. Entendre, seulement entendre.

(482)

L'écart en question à caractériser serait donc celui qui sépare lecteur ou auteur de ce qui est à l'origine des livres et qui s'y donnerait à entendre.

Tout le mystère tient dans ce verbe entendre. "Quelle est cette voix?" est, d'après l'un des deux interlocuteurs fictifs et anonymes de cet entretien infini, la "question à ne pas poser, car la voix est déjà présente dans l'entente de la question qu'on pose sur elle" (483).

Je ne pense pas que ces propos de Blanchot disent la vérité sur l'écriture de Beckett. Tout au plus la disent-ils sur l'écriture de Blanchot lui-même qui lit Beckett comme s'il était, lui Blanchot, l'auteur de ce qu'il lit ou comme si Beckett était l'auteur de ce que lui, Blanchot, a écrit. Blanchot cite dans "Oh tout finir" quelques phrases de *L'attente l'oubli* comme si Beckett en était l'auteur... Mais je crois que le courage, la ténacité, l'obstination exemplaires avec lesquelles il pose cette question de la voix permet d'envisager, à propos de Beckett ou à propos de tout artiste qui fait reposer tout ou partie de son œuvre sur la dissociation de voix distinctes, le paysage théorique permettant d'appréhender la littérature – ou la pensée, dont elle est l'un des modes incontestables – dans son essence. Les deux paramètres inséparables – et très difficiles à penser ensemble – sont l'écart et la voix. L'univers de Beckett a varié jusqu'à la nausée l'équation qui les suppose tous deux.

À y regarder de près, les premières manifestations de cette interrogation quant à la voix se trouvent dans l'œuvre sensiblement avant *Godot*, ou même avant *Molloy*, où Moran dit pour la première fois l'entendre. Si l'on veut jeter un peu de jour sur ces premières émissions vocales étranges de l'œuvre de Beckett, il faut revenir vers les premiers romans. Je m'attarderai un instant sur l'une des dernières scènes de *Watt*, où la voix n'est pas encore la voix, mais où l'hallucination dont le personnage est victime renseigne précieusement sur ce que tentera de mettre en place la *Trilogie*. Watt croit donc apercevoir sur la route qui mène à la gare et sur laquelle il jette un coup d'œil en arrière une silhouette humanoïde:

> Watt se lassait déjà de balayer cette route des yeux lorsque son attention fut fixée, et ranimée, par une forme, à première vue humaine, qui avançait en son milieu. La première pensée de Watt fut que cette créature était sortie de dessous terre, ou tombée du ciel. Et la seconde, quelque quinze ou vingt minutes après, qu'elle avait pu gagner sa position actuelle par voie d'abord d'une haie, puis d'un fossé.
>
> (233-34)

Le premier réflexe de Watt est le recours à une explication plus ou moins fantastique (les enfers, le ciel); l'explication rationnelle, qui finalement prévaudra, n'intervient que dans un second temps. Il y a dans cette hésitation, qui porte autant sur la nature de la vision que sur l'attitude à adopter envers elle, toute l'ambiguïté attachée à l'image beckettienne. J'aimerais montrer que la voix n'est pas traitée dans cette œuvre autrement que l'image, pour la bonne raison que la voix 'est' une image comme le dit justement Deleuze, mais comme le dit aussi bien avant lui Beckett: "C'est uniquement une question de voix, tout[e] autre image est à écarter," dit exemplairement le narrateur de *L'innommable* (100).

Je crois donc que la voix est par l'œuvre de Beckett traitée tantôt de façon rationnelle et réaliste; tantôt de façon plus difficile à caractériser, mais en tout certainement pas réaliste. Le mot 'fantastique' ne ferait évidemment pas l'affaire, mais il s'approcherait peut-être de ce que le mot français 'fantaisiste' ne saurait signifier, à savoir: relevant de la faculté nommé 'fantaisie.'[2]

Traitée sur le mode réaliste et rationnel la voix, pas plus que l'image, ne se défera jamais tout à fait du soupçon de surréel ou d'irréel ou de chimère qui pèse sur elle dès les premiers instants. Dans une pièce comme *...but the clouds...*, écrite plus de trente ans après *Watt*, et où la voix joue un rôle de tout premier plan, on retrouve à deux moments distincts deux sortes d'images qui correspondent à ces deux options et auxquelles sont aussi associées deux sortes de voix: une voix *off* fait d'abord se succéder des images construites et ordonnées, qui exposent le thème de la pièce de façon incontestablement rationnelle; mais la pièce tout entière est conçue et construite pour valoriser l'apparition totalement imprévisible, ardemment souhaitée et rarement vécue, d'un visage de femme articulant, de façon non pas exactement muette mais inaudible, quelques mots d'un poème de Yeats.[3]

Le passage de *Watt* est intéressant à plus d'un titre. Pour Watt comme pour tout narrateur beckettien l'image est avant tout un mystère qu'il s'agit d'éclaircir; la voix est dans ce souci d'élucidation à la fois un indice (le 'message' qu'elle délivre est tout près de dire la vérité) et un obstacle (la voix est elle-même comme une image, 'est' une image, et demande à ce titre à être élucidée). Mais le mystère n'empêche nullement le recours à des moyens d'interprétation purement rationnels. Au contraire: on a parfois l'impression qu'il les rend nécessaires. La richesse de l'œuvre beckettienne vient sans doute du fait qu'elle ne tranchera jamais entre ces deux thèses, antithétiques dans le principe

mais non dans la version fictive et pensante qu'elle en présente, thèses contradictoires si l'on veut, mais alternativement soutenues par les narrateurs divers, sur l'image et sa voix.

Le surgissement de la silhouette androgyne s'accompagne en effet, la chose est remarquable, de l'émission de mots se comportant eux-mêmes 'visuellement': "Dans le for obscur Watt sentit luire soudain, puis soudain s'éteindre, les mots, *Seul remède le régime*" (235). Ces quelques mots, il est difficile de ne pas le noter, se comportent comme ceux que Beckett imagine dans *...but the clouds...*, ils sont prononcés de façon inaudible; on pourrait même ajouter que leur silence est non pas compensé mais accompagné du surgissement d'un événement visuellement caractérisé. Cette concomitance confirme que les deux questions de l'image et de la voix sont consubstantiellement liées. L'œil et la voix se comportent d'ailleurs symétriquement: de même que la voix est sans son (murmurant de façon inaudible), de même les yeux sont en réalité non voyants – "unseeing eyes," dit la voix de *...but the clouds...* (260) – ou voyant sans lumière – l'œil "n'ayant nul besoin de lumière pour voir," dira sans ambiguïté le narrateur de *Mal vu mal dit* (27). Et le narrateur de *Watt* prend bien soin d'appeler par son nom l'événement qui perturbe son personnage: une hallucination. Je choisis de voir dans ce mot une caractérisation aussi bien de la chose visuelle (mais non vue à proprement parler) que de la chose sonore (mais non réellement entendue). Cette apparition de mots 'seulement' visibles est comme un signe avant-coureur des mots ('syntaxes') qui couvriront les murs de l'espace imaginaire de *All Strange Away* ou ceux, qui leur ressemblent tant, de *Bing*, mots eux-mêmes associés à un murmure quasi inaudible pour des yeux incapables de voir.

Pour résumer un peu brutalement les choses, je dirais que la première apparition de la voix dans l'œuvre de Beckett est visuelle. Ce qui ne signifie pas qu'elle ne soit pas déjà douée de ses caractéristiques essentielles. Elles sont me semble-t-il au nombre de cinq, que j'énumère rapidement.

La voix instaure d'abord un régime imaginaire, elle n'est pas dissociable de l'image, elle est l'un de ses visages (je pèse mes mots), elle est fictive.

Second point, la voix surgit ici, comme souvent, de façon imprévue et non contrôlable. Elle se présente sous la forme d'un flash, d'un éclair (ici visuel, mais dans *Comment c'est*, ce sera sous la forme de bribes qu'il s'agit seulement pour le narrateur de citer); elle s'exprime au discours direct.

Troisièmement, la voix constitue, dans le tissu ambiant, une sorte de micro espace, inclus et homogène à la fois: image dans l'image, ou discours dans le discours; cette inclusion joue presque systématiquement sur l'ambiguïté extérieur/intérieur. Ainsi les bribes de voix de *Comment c'est* seront à la fois des éclats venus d'ailleurs mais aussitôt intériorisés: "voix d'abord dehors quaqua de toutes parts puis en moi" (9).

Quatrième trait: la voix est remarquable. L'une de ses aptitudes essentielles est d'être citée (c'est le mot que *Comment c'est* ressasse à l'envi), ou répétée (comme dans *...but the clouds...*).

Enfin, la voix est prescriptive. Dans le cas de *Watt*, cette prescription est formulée de manière sans doute humoristique (quelque chose comme "Arrête l'alcool!"); il n'empêche: la voix dans l'œuvre de Beckett est une instance à laquelle il s'agit de ne pas de se dérober, il faut leur être fidèle, quand on n'est pas, comme M dans *...but the clouds...*, dépendant d'elles. La voix beckettienne en effet est sans doute là en lieu et place de la morale (j'entends par morale, en dehors de toute référence à un bien ou un mal quelconque, une instance qui force à envisager les choses sur le mode du 'il faut' ou du 'il faudrait'– comme à la fin de *L'innommable*, où s'exprime indubitablement la soumission à la voix par laquelle se narrateur se dit traversé: "Il *faut* continuer, je ne peux pas continuer, [...] je vais continuer"; je souligne).

C'est peut-être dans *Molloy*, malgré tout, que la voix beckettienne telle que nous l'imaginons spontanément fait sa première apparition. Aucun discours direct, cette fois, on va le voir. Mais une caractérisation morale plus nette que partout ailleurs:

> Et la voix que j'écoute, je n'ai pas eu besoin de Garber pour me la transmettre. Car elle est en moi et elle m'exhorte à être jusqu'au bout ce fidèle serviteur que j'ai toujours été, d'une cause qui n'est pas la mienne, et de remplir patiemment mon rôle […]. Comme vous voyez, c'est une voix assez ambiguë et qui n'est pas toujours facile à suivre, dans ses raisonnements et décrets. Mais je la suis néanmoins, plus ou moins, je la suis en ce sens, que je la comprends, et en ce sens, que je lui obéis.
>
> (204)

> J'ai parlé d'une voix qui me donnait des instructions, des conseils plutôt. Ce fut pendant ce retour que je l'entendis pour la première fois.

(263)

> J'ai parlé d'une voix qui me disait ceci et cela. Je commençais à m'accorder avec elle à cette époque, à comprendre ce qu'elle voulait. […] C'est elle qui m'a dit de faire le rapport.

(271)

Tous les lecteurs de Beckett connaissent cette voix, qui a fini par devenir un personnage à part entière de l'œuvre. Le titre *Compagnie* ne désigne rien d'autre que ce dédoublement essentiel, condition et objet du dialogue, sans doute de tout dialogue. La deuxième personne du singulier qui y joue un rôle de premier plan est l'indice d'une préoccupation fondatrice, elle concerne l'essence même de la littérature s'il est vrai que la littérature est, comme le dit Blanchot, affaire de voix.

Et les lecteurs de Beckett savent bien que tous ces dédoublements tournent autour d'un autre, sans doute plus fondamental, mais plus difficilement nommable, que les dispositifs inouïs de Beckett ne peuvent jamais désigner qu'obliquement: celui de la conscience elle-même. Le soi se regardant, le soi se souvenant de lui-même, le soi se critiquant, le soi s'écoutant: Krapp écoutant sa propre voix enregistrée (dans *La dernière bande*), May entendant la voix d'une mère si peu distincte d'elle-même (dans *Pas*), le Souvenant traversé par trois voix dont les didascalies précisent que c'est la sienne propre (dans *Cette fois*), le personnage anonyme et lui-même dédoublé allongé dans le noir à l'écoute d'une voix qui lui parvient à intervalles irréguliers et imprévisibles (dans *Compagnie*), Moran finissant par devenir celui qu'il est chargé de retrouver (dans *Molloy*), l'Œil (Œ) et l'Objet (O) se révélant pour finir ne faire qu'un (dans *Film*), etc.

J'aimerais pour finir faire quelques hypothèses susceptibles d'éclairer l'œuvre de Beckett, mais qui concernent un nombre impressionnant d'œuvres conçues et écrites à la même époque, par des écrivains ou des philosophes ne travaillant pas nécessairement dans la même mouvance que lui. Je pense par exemple à Coetzee qui dans son dernier livre fait prononcer à son personnage quelques paroles que ne renierait pas un narrateur beckettien:

> As for language, English has never been mine in the way it is yours. Nothing to do with fluency. I am perfectly fluent, as you can hear. But English came to me too late. It did not come with my mother's milk. In fact it did not come at all. Privately I have

always felt myself to be a kind of ventriloquist's dummy. It is not I who speak the language, it is the language that is spoken through me. It does not come from my core, *mon cœur*.

Pour ce qui est de parler, l'anglais n'a jamais été ma langue au sens où elle est la vôtre. Aucune maîtrise réelle. Je parle l'anglais parfaitement, comme vous l'entendez. Mais l'anglais m'est venu trop tard. En tout cas il ne m'est pas venu pas avec le lait de ma mère. En fait, il ne m'est jamais venu à proprement parler. Au fond de moi, je me suis toujours senti comme une marionnette entre les mains d'un ventriloque. Je ne parle pas, je suis parlé, le langage me traverse. Il ne vient pas de mon cœur.

(197-98; je traduis)

Ou encore: "Behold this being who eats with me, spends nights with me, says 'I' on my behalf" (Regardez ce personnage qui mange avec moi, qui passe ses nuits avec moi, qui dit "je" à ma place, 210). Il ne s'agit pas là d'un malaise passager, d'une particularité existentielle à laquelle tel ou tel serait sensible quand d'autres seraient épargnés; il s'agit de la condition même de l'écriture, s'il est vrai comme le dit Proust que " les beaux livres sont écrits dans une sorte de langue étrangère" (361). De quoi s'agit-il donc? "Mais quelle est cette voix?"

Dans un premier temps, on peut se dire, comme le disent eux-mêmes les narrateurs beckettiens, la voix est une figure, rien de plus. Mais l'affaire, on le sent malgré tout, est plus complexe. Et l'un des indices, incontestables, de cette complexité, est la fréquence obsessionnelle de cette figure.

Mais au fait, quelle figure? Et d'ailleurs, qu'est-ce qu'une figure?

La voix ainsi définie des cinq traits que j'ai dits (imaginaire, intempestive, liminaire, remarquable et morale) correspondrait assez bien à ce que, dans les manuels et nomenclatures rhétoriques, on appelait autrefois prosopopée. La prosopopée était cette figure au moyen de laquelle, dans des circonstances souvent solennelles, on donnait voix à ce qui n'en pouvait avoir (un mort, un absent, une entité abstraite, une ville). Le mot au fond est ambigu. *Prosopon* désigne bien le visage, le masque (le mal vu, donc – et peut-être toutes ces silhouettes étranges et quasi humanoïdes); mais de fait la prosopopée a toujours été un moyen moins de faire voir que de faire entendre (et le mal dit, le mal entendu sont évidemment à mettre en rapport avec elle).

La littérature selon Beckett n'est peut-être rien d'autre que la mise en fiction de cette donnée fondamentale: celle que constitue le dédoublement essentiel dont la voix est le lieu plus que le support. Je crois que Beckett est l'un des écrivains du siècle dernier, qui, en grand nombre, et fort différemment, ont réalisé leur œuvre en recourant à cette figure aussi désuète qu'insupprimable. La philosophie, l'histoire, la psychanalyse même, ont inventé des dispositifs textuels et pensants faisant appel à cette configuration étrangement figurale. Pour Michelet, l'écriture de l'histoire n'est rien d'autre que le moyen de redonner voix aux morts. Levinas, le philosophe qui tenta le retour à une éthique première élabora pour le faire les concepts de "visage" et de "voix." Foucault écrivit quant à lui des livres dont l'affrontement était le principe. Affrontement du discours reçu, ou ordinaire, à un discours 'autre' et dérangeant, indice de vérité: discours de la folie, discours du corps, discours de la littérature, etc. Heidegger lui aussi personnalisa la parole: "La parole parle. La parole? et non l'homme?" (22). Dans *La voix et le phénomène,* Derrida évoque "l'étrange autorité" de "l'instance de la voix," cette voix qui, dit-il encore, "garde le silence" (78). Le "ça parle" de Lacan ne fonctionne pas autrement, qui doue de parole une instance aphone. C'est sans doute Freud qui écrivit avec *Le Moi et le Ça* le texte exemplaire, où s'exprime à la première personne du singulier celle des trois instances du moi (le surmoi) qui a tant à voir avec la morale. Tous, soucieux d'objets sans mesure commune, furent amenés à opérer dans les discours une sorte de scission, d'où émergèrent, comme naturellement, deux personnages, l'un indiquant à l'autre le chemin à suivre.

Beckett est donc moins seul qu'on le penserait spontanément. Non qu'il se comporte en moraliste, bien sûr. Il s'en faut même de beaucoup. Mais on voit bien ce que le procédé du dédoublement vocal fait resurgir: la tentation archaïque, qu'on dirait presque irréductible, de douer la moindre entreprise abstraite à vocation plus ou moins éthique et verticale d'une silhouette vaguement humaine. Athéna déjà était aux côtés d'Ulysse, Virgile guidait Dante. Ce que le siècle qui vient de s'achever cherche à penser, en forgeant ces fictions figurales aussi étonnantes qu'incompatibles, c'est qu'aucun discours n'est jamais ni simple ni 'un'; que le duel est sa condition bien plus que son destin; et que l'écoute de la voix qui s'interpose a quelque chose à voir avec une élévation – même dérisoire.

Une dernière remarque. Face au phénomène étrange de l'hallucination qu'accompagne l'émission insonore, lumineuse et ironi-

quement raisonnable de la voix du dedans, Watt se trouve en proie à un irrésistible besoin de comprendre. Ce besoin de comprendre est dit tout à fait regrettable: "Il lui semblait, abstraction faite de tout sentiment égoïste de gêne ou de soulagement, que c'était regrettable, ce souci de savoir ce que c'était, la forme qui s'avançait sur la route, tout à fait regrettable" (235). Ce regret est bien évidemment le fait de la voix, dont le rôle est toujours, chez Beckett du moins, de dire ce qui serait bien, serait mieux, serait moins mal. Besoin de comprendre et conscience de la dérision qu'il y aurait à croire pouvoir le faire: il y a là tous les paramètres susceptibles d'aider à faire le départ entre la philosophie (dont la tâche est de comprendre, précisément)[4] et la littérature (que cette prétention fait sourire).

On ne peut exclure en théorie que par l'écriture philosophique, comme par la romanesque ou la poétique, s'exprime une subjectivité; que l'usage des figures n'y relève d'un "moi profond" (Proust) qui veillerait à les ajuster. La prosopopée selon Platon, ou selon Foucault, ou selon Rousseau, serait ainsi à mettre en rapport avec un imaginaire, une histoire, un projet chaque fois différent et chaque fois important grandement.

L'hypothèse pourtant peine à convaincre. Car le philosophe, même équivoque, travaille à l'élaboration de concepts, son chantier improbable s'apparente à la vérité. L'universel est son horizon, non la stricte adéquation à un sujet.

L'abstraction du discours se ferait au contraire par élévation, par 'abstraction.' Il faudrait donner à ce mot un sens résolument actif. Quelque chose comme: abstraction 'de soi.' Je pense à la remarque de Deleuze, citant "le mot déchirant de *L'usage des plaisirs* de Foucault: 'se déprendre de soi'" (1986, 103). L'abstraction ainsi entendue désignerait moins le statut d'un discours que son procès. Le propre du discours à vocation conceptuelle (soit le philosophique, selon Deleuze) serait ce 'mouvement' allant du plus subjectivement impliqué à l'extension la plus vaste, la moins contextuelle, sans qu'on puisse considérer que l'écriture qui y aspire puisse jamais être entièrement dégagée de son implantation originaire.

Au lieu que la littérature, que n'épargne pas non plus, on l'a vu, le désir de comprendre, procède par fictions décidées. Par configuration et narration raisonnées. Becket ne pense pas l'image, ne dit pas ce qu'elle est: il 'fait' des images. Et de même, il ne dit rien de la voix qui ne soit fictif et dérisoire, rien qui prétende à une quelconque universalité: il met en scène, en œuvre et en question des voix en grand nombre. Cha-

que œuvre de Beckett est sans doute une sorte de laboratoire et chaque dispositif nouveau, que varie immanquablement le suivant, peut être dit expérimental. À condition de se souvenir du mot si profond de Sartre selon lequel "l'expérimentateur fait partie du système expérimental."[5] On est ici loin du concept, de ses œuvres et de ses pompes. La connaissance et l'intelligence n'ont chance d'advenir qu'intriquées dans une matière non seulement subjective mais fictive. Les voix de Beckett, qui traversent ces silhouettes toutes plus ou moins doubles ou divisées, s'apparentent à ce que Deleuze appelait "personnages conceptuels" (Deleuze et Guattari, 60-81).

Les philosophes, les orateurs, les poètes ont toujours assez largement pratiqué la prosopopée; mais c'est la rhétorique, non la poétique, encore moins la philosophie qui l'a théorisée. C'est qu'elle était (qu'elle est toujours le plus souvent) perçue comme une figure, un procédé. Une manière parmi d'autres de persuader, de convaincre, de convertir, de faire effet. La voix qu'elle inventait, et mettait en scène, elle la douait d'une autorité impressionnante. La produisait de telle manière, dans des circonstances telles que l'esprit devait en être ébranlé. Affecté en tous cas.

La prosopopée, à condition qu'on la prenne au sérieux, serait ainsi l'un de ces lieux, au fond peu nombreux, où se touchent, comme fortuitement, le désir de plaire et de faire œuvre et celui d'être sage et vrai.

Notes

1.   Exemples tirés de *En attendant Godot* (45, 99, 81).

2.   Il faudrait ici faire une mise au point complète et savante sur le statut de l'imagination beckettienne. Je l'ai fait ici ou là, sans avoir jamais eu l'impression d'épuiser la question; ce qui est certain c'est que Beckett vague ici du côté de ce que les Romantiques anglais ont nommé 'fancy' et qui désignait, en gros, une imagination passive (opposée à l'imagination active, proprement nommée 'imagination,' et seule valorisée par cette génération).

3.   "*W's lips move, uttering inaudibly*"; dit le texte anglais (1984, 261); "*Les lèvres de F bougent, prononçant de façon inaudible*," dit la traduction d'Edith Fournier (1992, 46).

4.   Voici par exemple Spinoza (c'est le § 4 du premier chapitre du *Traité politique*): "ne pas tourner en dérision les actions des hommes, ne pas pleurer

sur elles, ne pas les détester, mais en acquérir une connaissance vraie" (*non ridere, non lugere, neque detestari, sed intellegere*).

5.   Sartre écrit, "La seule théorie de la connaissance qui puisse être aujourd'hui valable, c'est celle qui se fonde sur cette vérité de la microphysique: l'expérimentateur fait partie du système expérimental" (34, n. 1).

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IMAGE AND DISPOSITION
IN BECKETT'S LATE PLAYS

Anthony Uhlmann

This paper has two parts: in the first, I summarise elements of my conclusions with regard to the nature of the image and the aesthetic of nonrelation in Beckett's works, which I develop at length in my recent book *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image*. In the second, I draw on these ideas in offering readings of the nature of the image as disposition in Beckett's late plays and television plays.

What Is an Image?

An understanding of the image has emerged at various times within the western philosophical tradition that has been both suggested by and answered by certain kinds of artistic practice within the western aesthetic tradition. At times this idea has emerged with clarity and force, and at times the insights it claims to reveal have been ridiculed. This idea considers that the apprehension of the image (which emerges from the real and is impressed upon our senses like a "signet ring in wax") is fundamental both to our understanding of what the world 'is' and how we know that world. The idea is apparent in the work of the Ancient Greek Stoics, with their concepts of 'phantasia' (or image) and 'the comprehensive image' that grounds truth; in the work of the Roman rhetorician Quintillian, who speaks of an image which is so forceful that we immediately apprehend its truth; in Descartes, who (according to Stephen Gaukroger) draws his understanding of the "clear and distinct" idea from Quintillian (Gaukroger, 119-23) (though Descartes moves from here to an intense focus on epistemology that leaves behind and disparages the image once it has been used as a point of departure). It is apparent in Spinoza who both works with certain Cartesian ideas and returns to ideas drawn from the Ancient Stoics in developing his understanding of the three kinds of knowledge. It is there at the end of the nineteenth century in the work of William James and in the idea of the image developed by Henri Bergson in *Matter and Memory*. These ideas in turn are developed and transformed by an army of modernist

writers and artists who answered Bergson and James (see Megay; Maxwell; Douglas; Fink; Gillies). The idea has recently returned again, in the work of Gilles Deleuze, who develops a theory of the image in art that draws heavily on the work of Charles Sanders Peirce and Bergson, in particular, and is most fully developed in his *Cinema* books (but which is also an important element in his works on Francis Bacon and Samuel Beckett).

In the *Logic of Affect*, Paul Redding traces points of correspondence between eighteenth- and nineteenth-century German Idealism and contemporary theories of cognition. Redding underlines how a key distinction, or point of contention, in both nineteenth- and twentieth-century debates around cognition, concerns the problem of whether sensations should be considered 'presentations' or 'representations.' 'Direct Realists' consider that sensations are impressed upon us and directly perceived by the nervous system. Such presentations are understood to have being in their own right (and therefore one looks to ontology when considering their nature). Others, including idealists such as Fichte and Schelling argue that what occurs in our experience of the world is the production of 'representations.' That is, they contend that the immediate process of sensation is always lost and out of reach, and what remains are the interpretations of the sensations, and such interpretations or *re*presentations involve or produce knowledge (and so one looks to epistemology when considering their nature) (Redding, 90-123).

What is at stake is the understanding of the process of perception: both the manner in which we sense or apprehend the world and the manner in which we interpret what we have sensed or apprehended. The thinkers who work within the minor tradition I have sketched above have in common that, like the Direct Realists, they consider the image itself to have real being, one that directly acts upon us. The word 'image' here needs to be understood in a wider than normal sense: that is, it concerns all those materials that are presented to our nervous system via our senses. In being presented to us, these things literally touch us: the sound waves that vibrate the mechanisms of our inner ear; the bodies that touch ours; the molecules of other entities that are captured by our senses of smell and taste; the waves of light that pass into our eyes. In each case, following Bergson, the brain screens these images. Firstly, things project their images through our senses onto our brain. The brain itself (which, for Bergson, forms another image) then acts as a screen in two ways: images are screened upon it in the manner of a

cinema screen, and it screens or filters these images in interpreting them. For Bergson, we consciously perceive by subtracting all those things from an image that are not of interest to us and by focussing on those things which might either act upon us, or upon which we might act.

The presentation is the image in its fullness: William James's "blooming buzzing confusion" (488). The representation is an interpretation of the presentation, an interpretation that involves removing elements which are not of interest and adding already formulated understandings of it, a process which, when the human is fully and properly functioning, proceeds by habit.

So how might the image be made in art? In his first novel, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932), Samuel Beckett describes an aesthetic theory that emphasises the connections or relations between things rather than the nature of those things themselves. In a later letter to Georges Duthuit (Gontarski and Uhlmann, 15-21), Beckett outlines a somewhat different aesthetic understanding, one that emphasises nonrelation, or the refusal to fully draw connections.

In "Peintres de l'empêchement" (first published in 1948), Beckett states that all works of art have involved the readjustment of the relation between subject and object (1983, 137); a relation that he claims has now broken down. He announced this crisis over a decade before and prior to World War II, in 1934, in another review, "Recent Irish Poetry" (see 1983). The breakdown might be understood to have taken place because, on the one hand, the subject is no longer able to understand itself as a simple point of relation, and, on the other, the object is no longer something which is able to be simply represented, simply understood. This problem, whereby the thing itself is constantly eluding any attempt to be portrayed, is something Beckett attempts to approach, strategically, from different sides at different times. The use of the image, which serves to 'present,' or create, an object rather than represent one, is one strategy. Yet in "Peintres de l'empêchement" (136), Beckett answers his own question as follows: "Il reste à réprésenter les conditions de cette dérobade" (What remains is to represent the conditions of this evasion). That is, another approach, which is also related to the use of the image, is the attempt to reveal the process of hiding, to create a powerful affect by occluding rather than attempting to represent the essential components of that object.

The occlusion of the precise relation between relatable terms has a long history in art. Stephen Greenblatt, for example, claims that some-

thing happens to Shakespeare's artistic method around the time he writes *Hamlet*:

> Shakespeare found that he could immeasurably deepen the effect of his plays, that he could provoke in the audience […] a peculiarly passionate intensity of response, if he took out a key explanatory element, thereby occluding the rationale, motivation, or ethical principle that accounted for the action that was to unfold. The principle was not the making of a riddle to be solved, but the creation of a strategic opacity. This opacity […] released an enormous energy that had been at least partially blocked or contained by familiar, reassuring explanations.
>
> (323-24)

The leaving of gaps, then, the development of images that have not been fully interpreted becomes important, but this is done in Beckett in part by representing how images evade understanding. A paradoxical element of the attempt to present the image, then, to show how the world functions, to present an image of its functioning, is to leave gaps within and between the subject who perceives and the object that is presented.

In Beckett's later plays (beginning with *Play* in 1963) the object that is presented is often a state of being or disposition: a state of being that corresponds to an emotional state. In *Samuel Beckett and the Philosophical Image* I argue that Beckett develops ontological images, or images that present states of being or dispositions, in his late works, and I link this with theories of the image and the body developed by the Ancient Stoics, theories we now know Beckett was familiar with at least since he read and took notes to Windelband's *History of Philosophy* in the 1930s (see Engelberts and Frost). The Stoic Chrysippus shows that the emotions correspond to a state or disposition of the soul (Gould, 107). I wish to argue that these dispositions are not presented to us as whole, single images, but that, rather, we are offered fragmented images within works. Further, while the fragmentary images that comprise these works resist any simple relation of part to part, they nevertheless resonate so that the fragments, in effect, offer distinct but nevertheless complementary views of a single disposition. This is not always done in the same way, however. I will sketch below two kinds of resonating nonrelations within works that present dispositions. Firstly, the disjunction between physical and mental images apparent in a number

of late plays, and secondly, the series of disjunctions found in certain of the TV plays.

The Physical Image and the Mental Image
In a number of Beckett's later plays, we are offered a contrast between two kinds of image. Firstly, a single physical image is abstracted from context and impressed upon us as present, or as if it were present, as in *Play*, *Not I*, *Rockaby*, and *That Time*. In *That Time* the face 'is' the present state of the one who listens to the memories. A second kind of image is also offered: these are images that are made through words. In *That Time* these involve a series of images, linked to disjointed memories from a past that has become confused. In *A Piece of Monologue* we are told of the pictures of the (I almost said) "loved ones" that the protagonist once watched on the wall, now torn to shreds and lost, yet that have left impressions on the wall where they were once hung. We are further given a final image of a funeral in the rain. The standing protagonist on stage, who speaks of another who is perhaps himself in the third person, offers a fragmented image of the one described at a later stage of development, when all action has been reduced to standing and recounting what is past.

In both of these examples there is a distinction between a physical image of a present state and the images of a memory or a fancy, which that present state is engaged 'almost exclusively' in attempting to call forth. In effect, the present state, the physical image, is nothing other than the precondition for the attempt to generate the second kind of image: the memory, the fancy.

The first kind of image, the physical image, is strongly tied to a state of being, a habit, or a disposition, which is also at times reduced to being a simple function. That is, at times the first image is a function that produces the second kind of image: for example, the function or state of listening/remembering in *That Time*, the function or state of talking in *Not I*. The image of *Not I* is an image of talking, and it produces an image of a stream of verbiage, and among the other images spewed forth within that stream is that of the silent solitary life of an absolutely isolated woman. In a way the voice and the mouth that cannot cease speaking have been split from the silent body of the orphan woman given to us by the verbal descriptions: the physical image has been split from the mental image. Yet the silent woman and the frantic mouth draw attention to an anxiety about self, in each case linked to the presence or absence of voice. In *Ohio Impromptu* the complex interplay

between the two kinds of images becomes apparent as we read the first image of the two men at table through the second set of images conveyed in the story: that is, we understand the first physical image to involve a state of affairs, the disposition of mourning, from which it is difficult to emerge. The story, too, is one of mourning, and the mental and physical images resonate, each constituting the same disposition from different perspectives.

I would argue that the two sets of images interact to create a real being, with 'real' carrying the force given to it by the Stoics: a physical reality, the reality of bodily things. Yet it is also a being in time, with the present state held in place by its apparent relations to past states. It is fixed in place at times, stuck, struggling to break free perhaps, or perhaps having little other existence than this. Beckett's nonrelational images still involve resonance (the sense that a meaningful link exists), even as they refuse relations.

Nonrelation within the Presentation: *Ghost Trio* and *…but the clouds…*

There are other kinds of nonrelation within dispositions in Beckett's TV plays, however, and some of these might be clarified by paying attention to some of the disjunctions that occur both between and within images in Beckett's plays for television *…but the clouds…* and *Ghost Trio*. It is worth noting that of Beckett's five television plays (*Eh Joe*, *Ghost Trio*, *…but the clouds…*, *Nacht und Träume*, and *Quad*), three include fragmentary citations at their centre: *Ghost Trio* includes excerpts from the largo of Beethoven's Fifth Piano Trio, *The Ghost*, *…but the clouds…* a brief passage from the end of the W. B. Yeats poem "The Tower," and *Nacht und Träume* the "last 7 bars of Schubert's *Lied*, *Nacht und Träume*" (1990, 465). Indeed, in each case the citations provide the title for the work. In all three plays, these fragments may be used to draw out more or less obvious interpretations of the plays: Beethoven's *The Ghost* may be linked to the ghostliness of *Ghost Trio*; *Nacht und Träume*, or 'night and dreams,' may be related to the protagonist who dreams in that play; so, too, Yeats's fragment refers to the fleetingness of things, even or especially the most beautiful and precious, the face of the beloved for example. I would argue that when one considers this more closely it becomes apparent that these references, rather than shedding light on the meaning of the works, serve to indicate or evoke the states of being, or dispositions, which are presented within them.

The disposition presented in *Ghost Trio* is hauntedness: F (for "male figure") not only seems a ghost who haunts, he is haunted in turn by the female voice he thinks he hears and the boy who comes to the door. So, too, the voice V (for "female voice"), which suddenly ceases, leaving F to act out his own haunting of the room without instruction, haunts through its absence from the rest of the work. The disposition presented in *…but the clouds…* is desperation in the face of the fleetingness of things and a concomitant desire to fix or recall that which is lost.

While both of these plays might be thought to offer dispositions, they both also include fragmentary images within them, images that draw nonrelations, or disjunctions, to the surface. There are a number of images in *Ghost Trio*: that of V, the female voice, which offers instructions and descriptions to the viewer and prefigures (even in a sense calls forth) the actions of F; that of F in the room, both crouching on his stool and moving about the room; those of objects that exist within and comprise the room (the patch of floor, the window, the door, the palette); that of the music F listens to; that of the rain outside the window F opens; that of F's face seen in the mirror (which opens an internal space in the room for F); that of the empty corridor behind the door F opens; that of the boy who later appears behind the same opened door. While we cut from one image to the next in a manner with which we are very familiar through the rules of continuity editing in film, the cuts do not seem familiar. In many cases the transition from one image to the next opens into a space of uncertainty. For example, the kind of link between the room and the world outside it is unclear. F opens the window and we see a shot of rain falling. While the link is heavy with meaningfulness, the meaning of this link is not apparent. The same sense of disruption, which causes us to sense a meaningfulness within a link at the same time as we remain frustrated in our efforts to comprehend the meaning of that link, occurs when the music emerges from the tape recorder F holds; when the voice of V stops half way through and fails to reappear; when F encounters his reflection; when the boy appears and smiles at F before disappearing into shadow; when F lifts his head to gaze into the camera and, by implication, at the audience. In each case we are made to question the nature of these relations and in each case their nature remains uncertain: they are nonrelations. These nonrelations create unresolved tension, a sense of the ineffable or uncanny, which creates in turn a sensation of hauntedness in the viewer, a

sensation that corresponds to the state of being that is presented by the work.

In *…but the clouds…* the effort to fix is seen in M, crouching in concentrated stillness in his inner sanctum trying to call forth the image of the loved one; in M 1, who moves in from the backroads to his closet to change into night clothes, then from the closet to the inner sanctum, and, inversely, out from the sanctum come morning to the closet for day clothes and out to walk the backroads, in a repetition that serves to efface the day of the present in connecting one insomniac night with the next. The fixing of the night of the insomniac as the sole present (the day of the backroads being effaced in the play) opens a neutral, almost non-temporal space in which an effort takes place to resuscitate the past by calling forth one of three images of the beloved face: one which appears and disappears in a moment, one which lingers, and one which lingers and murmurs "inaudibly" Yeats's lines, "but the clouds of the sky…when the horizon fades… or a bird's sleepy cry… among the deepening shades…" (1990, 422). These images, we are told, appear only rarely, with the normal state being that in which no image at all appears. In this play there is also a disjunction of images: the set pieces of crouching in the sanctum; seeing the empty space; entering the space; moving to the closet; moving to the sanctum; leaving the sanctum; moving to the closet; returning to the backroads, are all held together by the disembodied voice V, which is M's voice (417). Yet rather than this voice being closely connected with the scene, the voice seems to bring the scene into being by describing it. We realise this from the very beginning, when V feels he has made an error in his description, "No, that is not right" (419), which he goes on to correct. The voice, then, sets or calls forth the scene (much like the voice in *Ghost Trio*, though here it is much more closely associated with the scene described, whereas the V of *Ghost Trio* withdraws, and her link with F cannot be determined). In this way, the V of *…but the clouds…* seems to call forth an image, an image of the desire to fix in place, which is, in turn, fixed in place through repetition. V, then, underlines or affirms the disposition the play presents, that of the desire to fix or resuscitate what is past. In paying attention to this repetition, however, we become aware of a disjunction between the image of the state of being and the presentation of that image. The verbal presentation speaks of a 'past' disposition that is doubled or returned to the present in being presented. Just as *Ghost Trio's* disjunctions, or nonrelations, project a sensation of hauntedness which doubles the hauntedness apparent in the images, the

nonrelations within *...but the clouds...* draw our attention to a process of attempting to fix what is past, a process equally apparent in the images presented.

While we become aware of the gaps that present themselves between the fragmentary images, we nevertheless sense a unity, which is a unity of disposition. The fragments all lead us to a single disposition, and this common sense of being generates resonance across or through the gaps, creating the sensation that something important here needs to be understood. The works challenge us to understand but do not allow us to understand through the intellect alone; rather, they lead us towards a feeling, and through the complex interrelations they establish, they create a sense of the meaningful.

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IMAGES MUST TRAVEL FURTHER:
Bataille and Blanchot Read Beckett

Paul Sheehan

Perhaps the most prescient of Beckett's early critics were the French writers Georges Bataille and Maurice Blanchot in their analyses of (respectively) *Molloy* and *The Unnamable*. In this paper I argue that the essence of the intellectual friendship that the two critics shared – one of the great tacit 'partnerships' of the last century, which has yet to be fully unravelled – can be discerned through their writings on Beckett. His novels are thus treated as a kind of 'border' across which their own ideas continue to emerge and evolve, which in turn has implications for the development of French theory.

What do we owe our friends after they die? Our sole duty, says Maurice Blanchot, is 'not' to pretend to carry on a dialogue with them. "When speech subsides," he writes, "it is not only this exigent speech that has ceased, it is the silence that made it possible and from which it returned along an insensible slope toward the anxiety of time" (1971, 292). As the underlying agency of friendship, silence must be respected at all cost, which means recognising its complicity with loss and disappearance.

These animadversions are occasioned by the death of Georges Bataille, with whom Blanchot shared a close and long – just over twenty-years – intellectual friendship. Beginning in December 1940, it evolved into an enigmatic and unorthodox literary affiliation. Bataille is credited with the about-face in Blanchot's politics, turning him away from the violent right-wing nationalism he supported from 1936-39. And Blanchot, for his part, is recognised as initiating Bataille's transformation as a writer, impressing on him the formal virtues of style, structure and rhythm that he had hitherto ignored. (See Surya, 312-13). Beyond this, however, the silence each maintained about their comradeship – the first of many silences, as we shall see – reduces us to conjecture.

Perhaps the only avenue of exploration left open, then, is through the dialogue they conducted with each other via their work, and other people's. Like their peers, Bataille and Blanchot were adept at assimilating German thought, and it is here that they afford us some glimpses of their intense mutual affinity. Hegel and Nietzsche loom largest for contrasting reasons. Hegel provokes in them a complex, ambivalent response. On the one hand, their engagement is in the wake of his rehabilitation by Alexandre Kojève, which began in the mid-1930s. Bataille had attended the famous seminars, and come away "bursting, crushed […] suffocated and transfixed" (qtd. in Surya, 189) completely swayed by Kojève's construal of Hegel as the philosopher of death, terror, and the end of history. On the other hand, both Bataille and Blanchot attempt to 'disrupt' the dialectic by incorporating into it inassimilable excess and heterogeneity, reaching towards the counter-Hegelian condition of 'absolute non-knowledge.'

For Bataille, Nietzsche is the prophet or diagnostician of this excess. Through the introduction of his non-recuperable negativity, history's end leads not to the final closure of the dialectic, but to a vicious circle, a moment of "toxic time" that sets in motion the temporal interruption of eternal return (Stoekl, 108). For Blanchot, Nietzsche's negation of God is the precondition for a far-reaching animus against authority, one that extends even to the "will to 'take sides against one's inclinations,' the search in oneself for what is dangerously opposed to oneself" (1995, 291).

After these two figures, I would argue that Samuel Beckett is most essential for the thriving of the partnership. Where Hegel provides a background of conflict, and Nietzsche a blueprint for revolt, it is Beckett, their contemporary, who provides immediate affirmation of their ideas about language, voice, silence, death and abjection. What is more, Beckett is doing this in the novel – a form with which both Bataille and Blanchot had some experience – and is finding ways to outwit the rigours and compromises of narrative logic that they had also struggled against. For this reason, then, Beckett is a kind of optic through which we can glimpse the contours of the Bataille–Blanchot relationship at its starkest and most revealing.

Their initial writings on Beckett are produced in the early 1950s at the mid-point of their twenty-year friendship. Bataille's review of *Molloy* appears in the pages of *Critique*, the scholarly journal he founded five years earlier; and Blanchot contributes his essay on *The Unnamable* to the *Nouvelle Revue Française* – recently reactivated,

after a ten-year break, under the editorial guidance of Jean Paulhan, whom Blanchot had written about twelve years earlier, in "How Is Literature Possible?"

The major operation taking place in these two pieces is a combination of recognition and exploitation – recognising their own concerns in Beckett's work, to which they were uncannily attuned, and then exploiting that work by developing and extending their concerns 'through' it. It must be said, then, that the figure they are constructing is a curiously contorted one. Beckett the dramatist is nowhere to be found in either text – understandably so, in the case of Bataille, writing in 1951, but a more glaring omission on Blanchot's part, given that his review is published in October 1953, nine months after *Godot* scandalised the Parisian theatre world. Subsequent pieces by Blanchot, in 1961 and 1990, address *How It Is* and *Stirrings Still* yet still neglect to mention any plays.

From our fifty-year vantage point, the critical reviews of *Molloy* and *The Unnamable* could be seen as the two founding texts for Beckett and theory, cornerstones of the many-sided industry that thrives today. The purpose of this paper, then, is two-fold. First, it is to show the ways in which Beckett is a useful medium or testing-ground for the elaboration of concerns common to Bataille and Blanchot. And then, in a kind of reverse angle, to suggest how Beckett sets some of the terms whereby theory will be developed via these two key figures before they are taken up by the Sixties generation of critical thinkers. By implication, if nothing else, I hope to shed some light on Beckett's contribution to the pre-history of French theory.

"Le Silence de Molloy": The Sleep of Reason

In his piece "Le Silence de Molloy," Bataille calls the book "the most unabashedly unbearable story in the world," a work that is also a "sordid wonder" (1979, 55). He makes clear that his interest in the novel is, first and last, autobiographical. The first is at the level of identification. Recalling similar vagrants he has met, Bataille tells us that Molloy is all around us, that "both you and I have met him" (55). But in a typical Bataillean reversal, we also cannot have met him, because he – which is to say, the type of derelict human being he embodies – does not really exist. He is a figure of pure anonymity, so to identify him in any way at all is to misrepresent him. Indistinct and elusive, he embodies the essence of being and is for that reason, fundamentally 'unnamable.'

After making this claim Bataille adds, almost as an after-thought, a note about a real vagabond from his past that still troubles him. This is followed by another autobiographical inflection, a mere passing reference that has, nonetheless, been elucidated by Bataille's biographer Michel Surya. About twenty-five years earlier, Bataille had attempted to compose a work of his own along similar lines to Beckett's. Possibly entitled "The Joyful Cynic," it was to have been an episodic novel in which the character of the title meets a tramp in the country and kills him – "in the hope," writes Bataille, "of gaining access to his animal immediacy" (qtd. in Surya, 56). Nothing has survived of the work, but the outlines of its non-existence, the after-image of its absence, is invoked in *Molloy*.

Yet despite Bataille's disarmingly personal approach to the book, one of its effects, like *The Unnamable* on Blanchot, two years later, is to make him speak Beckettese. Between them they conceive a two-sided Beckett, a Janus-faced figure that reflects the different bearings of the two novels. Bataille speaks the imagistic Beckett, the writer concerned with the processes of immediate perception, with providing sensory information that, as Anthony Uhlmann has shown, permits the drawing of relations even as those relations are exceeded (80). Responding to this figure, Bataille's review is interwoven with moments of dramatic visual intensity, moments that seek to anchor his assertions in concrete images. So Bataille says that he would be the character Molloy, if he were indifferent to "the myriad difficulties that overwhelm a man when he abandons himself to nature, rain, and the earth, to the immense quicksand of the world and of things" (55). As to the vagrants we have met (or that we cannot have met), they present their own unique insignia: "an ancient accumulation of filth," the distinctive stigmata of "an enterprise […] that had ended in shipwreck" (55).

Some of Bataille's images are worthy of Beckett himself, as when he defines the freedom of writing in terms of a response to the "possibilities present […] in those deep currents that flow through the oceanic agitation of words" (57). Language, in Molloy's world, is radically deficient, "nothing more than a deserted castle whose gaping cracks let in the wind and rain: it is […] the defenseless expression death wears as a disguise" (57). There are also images-by-association, as when *Molloy* is described as belonging to an elusive reality like "that of a myth – monstrous, and arising from the slumber of reason" (62) – evidently a reference to Goya's famous self-portrait, "The Sleep of Reason Pro-

duces Monsters," in which a comatose man is haunted by demonic-looking owls and bats.

But Bataille's dominant image, the one to which he keeps returning, is of physical debilitation: "this horrible figure painfully swinging along on his crutches" (62), defined by his "repulsive ambulation" (63). Limping, shambling Molloy is an image of alterity, a reminder of "the fear [...] that governs our human gestures, our erect postures and our clear phrases" (62). This image brings to mind a piece Bataille wrote more than twenty years earlier, entitled "The Big Toe," for his journal *Documents*. The big toe plays a significant part in keeping us upright, but rather than recognise its vital importance we denigrate it, discomfited by its proximity to terrestrial mud. Hence "man's secret horror of his foot" (1985, 21), a reaction he tenders to all things base and shameful. Molloy is the big toe made flesh, so to speak – a chthonic, ignoble figure whose natural habitat is mud and refuse, a compelling reminder of the indigence and infirmity that we are all fated to confront.

"Where Now? Who Now?": Neutral Speech Approaches

Blanchot moves us from the personal to the impersonal. In contrast with Bataille's aggrandisement of the image, he takes up the vocalic Beckett, the insistent speaking entity, whose voice is impersonal, tireless, wayward and compulsive. In fact, in his review, "Where Now? Who Now," Blanchot pursues a difficult passage "through" the imagistic directives of the text in order to examine the uncompromising imperatives of voice.

He begins boldly, by adapting the question that resonates throughout the work: "Who is speaking in the books of Samuel Beckett?" The question is rephrased, in a more aureate register, two paragraphs later, namely: "What is the void that becomes speech in the open intimacy of the one who disappears into it?" (2003, 210). That initial question, then, does not assume a name, a person, or an identity. "Who is speaking" implies, rather, 'what is speaking,' 'what is speech,' or 'what precedes speech.' The line of enquiry could be more fully elaborated as follows: 'what are the enabling conditions for speech that work to disable the figure we call the "speaker," the one who speaks, who is not one, and who cannot master the speech that issues from him, or her, or it?'

The shift from image to voice is plotted, then, as a metamorphic change, a reorientation from the vivid evocation of the object-world to the pure linguistic space of the text. *Malone Dies*, in this regard, is tran-

sitional. Away from "the free horizon of forest and sea" (2003, 211), those geographical markers of *Molloy*, the sequel picks up the tale in Malone's bedroom – a spatial dwindling that is also, in the context of the vocalic Beckett, an expansion. For Malone's pencil effectively 'enlarges' his field of existence, "by making his space the infinite space of words and telling" (212). *The Unnamable*, too, follows the same path from image to voice but via a more exigent process of self-evacuation. Blanchot writes: "the old figures reappear, phantoms without substance, empty images revolving mechanically around an empty center that the nameless 'I' occupies" (212). Blanchot encapsulates this shift in the term "motionless vagrancy" (213), as if Molloy were somehow still abiding in the "vice-existers" of the Unnamable, but his halting, stumbling physical movements subsumed by a forest of exclamations, a sea of utterances, the "oceanic agitation of words," as Bataille so aptly puts it.

Between these two complementary versions of Beckett, image and voice, lies a meeting-point for Bataille and Blanchot, a locus that in some sense defines their relationship. What if, says Blanchot, we were to answer the question, Who is speaking?, in the most straightforward way possible, i.e., by replying, Samuel Beckett. This "comfortable convention," as Blanchot calls it, will not do because to answer in this manner means taking the book's narrative utterances as the self-evident outcome of experience, the lived experience of the writer. In which case, the torments of the narrator would be authorial confessions, articulations of the deepest held anxieties of his own suffering soul. "The word *experience* alludes to what is actually felt," writes Blanchot. "But *The Unnamable* is precisely experience lived under threat of the impersonal, the approach of a neutral speech that speaks itself alone, that goes through the one who hears it, that is without intimacy, excludes any intimacy" (2003, 212-13). As a form of experience, this revokes any common understanding of the word. Instead, it brings into play what is perhaps the key initiative of the Bataille–Blanchot partnership: the notion of 'inner experience.'

Inner Experience: What the Dead Things Know
For both Bataille and Blanchot, inner experience is somewhat misleadingly named, given that it is neither 'inner' nor 'experience.' Everyday, lived experience works to construct selfhood, hence its problematic associations with the metaphysical coordinates of presence, immediacy and pre-reflective truth. Inner experience, by contrast, is neither interior

nor subjective, but the experience of its relation to an incommensurable outside. This puts it at odds with the tradition of self-formation known as *Bildung*, where experience teaches and instructs, and launches a teleology whose end-point is knowledge. Inner experience, then, is an experience "laid bare, free of ties, even of an origin, of any confession whatever" (Bataille 1988, 3). As the experience of its relation to an incommensurable outside, inner experience has three precepts that could be summarised as follows: (1) It does not reassure or console, and cancels any hope of salvation. (2) It seeks no authority beyond itself, which is to say, beyond its own experience – although all authority must be expiated. (3) Its method is contestation of everything, and its end-point or outcome is *non-savoir*, non-knowledge or 'unknowing.'

These precepts are tested through Beckett's novelistic example. Bataille sees the work in terms of self-contestation: though Molloy claims to be human, it is an avowal that the rest of the novel never ceases to put in doubt. Bataille finds the strongest evidence for this in Molloy's indifference and forgetfulness – an attitude that leads him, uncomplainingly, through a world of "fathomless misery" (1979, 57). Consolation, hope and salvation are swiftly despatched, with a quotation from Dante's *Inferno*: "Abandon hope all ye who enter," which Bataille says could be the epigraph to the novel. And the question of knowledge is also promptly dismissed, via one of Molloy's terse admissions: "All I know [...] is what the words know, and the dead things, and that makes a handsome little sum" (qtd. in Bataille 1979, 57).

Blanchot's strategy, in terms of identifying inner experience, is more precipitant. He takes it as a given, reading the trilogy as if its narrative principles were in accordance with these precepts. So for him, Moran is the movement of self-contestation. In pursuing Molloy, and becoming him, he "enters the way of error without end" (2003, 211), executed in the absence of knowledge. As Blanchot moves through the trilogy, inner experience is implicit in his reflections on 'silence' – not actual silence but constitutive, impersonal silence, that which is not accountable in terms of sound. And so the "terrible discovery" of the Unnamable is that "when it does not speak, it is still speaking, when it ceases, it perseveres, not silently, for in it silence speaks eternally" (2003, 210). Inner experience continues through this silence, on the other side of interiority. It is through this ruthless, unremitting self-abandonment, as it is discerned in the trilogy, that a poetics of silence begins to take shape.

Bataille Reads Blanchot

A similar move is apparent in Bataille's *Molloy* review, where he draws a vital link between death and silence. Initially, he is unconvinced that literature can deal adequately with the subject. For a work to treat death – "that final silence," as he calls it – in a discursive fashion, i.e., by thematising it, would be to parody it. Literature, he says, "recoils before the final step that silence would be" (1979, 58). *Molloy*, however, offers another perspective. Death is indifferent to everything – and so, too, as we have seen, is Beckett's title character. Bataille calls him "this death's equivalent on crutches," who still, despite all the odds against him, clings on to "this death-obsessed life." In parallel with this merging of opposites is Beckett's unorthodox literary praxis, which, through its negation of meaningful language, is "in the end silence" (58). This is the final meaning of "le silence de Molloy," as Bataille reads it. Molloy is silence, within the language of the text that gives him life; and he is death, within the life of which he cannot let go. Molloy thus incarnates silence-in-literature as much as he does death-in-life.

In February 1952, nine months after "Le Silence de Molloy," Bataille reviews Blanchot's novella *Au moment voulu* (*When the Time Comes*). The piece is entitled "Silence et littérature," and it begins by addressing Blanchot's celebrated anonymity. Bataille draws an unlikely comparison with H. G. Wells's *The Invisible Man*, whose key image is the title character removing the bandages from his face to reveal – nothing, a void. Could this be Blanchot, whose absence from the public eye has given him a similar "visible nothingness"? No, says Bataille, it is not his marked anonymity that makes him an 'invisible man,' it is his 'language,' and the condition for that language, which is 'silence.' He writes: "C'est, sur un autre plan, le silence que révèlent les phrases que défont – ou développent, si l'on veut, – ses ouvrages romanesques. Je reconnaîtrai cependant qu'à cette différence près, l'image est exacte" (99) (It is, from another perspective, the silence revealed by his sentences that his fictional works undo – or develop, if you will. I will acknowledge, however, that except for this difference, the image [i.e., the unbandaged invisible man] is fitting; my and editor's translation). "The image is fitting": Bataille is still concerned with the sovereignty of the imagistic relation, and its power of effacement as well as appearance, even as he appears to concede everything to voice and silence.

Blanchot, however, persists in plotting the shift from image to voice. It is even more apparent in "Words Must Travel Far," his meditation on Beckett's *How It Is*. Cast in the form of a dialogue, one inter-

locutor attempts to evoke the book's vivid imagery, to which the other replies: "But what is this voice?" The iterated phrase becomes a refrain, an unanswerable enquiry, on which note the piece ends. But before it does, the conversation turns to the experience of literature. Blanchot has already addressed this in "Where Now? Who Now?" via what he calls the "classical" literary experience – a sublimation of all the dark and demonic forces that compel a writer to write. Significantly, one of conditions on which this "classical" experience is founded is "the passion of images" (2003, 214).

In "Words Must Travel Far," one of Blanchot's speakers takes up the subject of literary experience again, via the decidedly 'non'-classical example of Beckett, and suggests that it is an experience that combines both reading and writing. The other speaker prefers the term 'hearing' to reading; criticism, the act of critical reading, is an act of 'hearing' more than of 'seeing,' a response to voice rather than to image. To which the first replies: "Yes, and thus we find justified in Beckett's case the disappearance of every sign that would merely be a sign for the eye. Here the force of seeing is no longer what is required; one must renounce the domain of the visible and of the invisible, renounce what is represented, albeit in negative fashion. Hear, simply hear" (1993, 329).

Given this credo, it is no surprise that Blanchot should avoid Beckett's dramatic works, where the image can compete on its own terms with voice and silence. But more significantly, this displacement of image with voice highlights a tension in the Bataille–Blanchot intellectual friendship – a tension that is resolved, or put to productive use, via the difference directions from which they approach it. I suggest, then, that in the context of their affiliation, the poetics of silence is part of the dialogue that sustains their rapport. It runs the gamut from personal silence – the discretion and critical obliquity governing their friendship – to impersonal silence, the point at which silence becomes 'thought' and can be theorised in terms of a shared lexicon of death, indifference, contestation and non-knowledge.

Beckett is the medium whereby these two writers negotiate their poetics. Yet it is clear that Beckett, too, encompasses all these figures of silence, from the personal to the impersonal. As we know from his letter to Axel Kaun, in 1937, these figures determined his creative development – articulated in his yearning to dissolve the "terrible materiality of the word surface" and link "unfathomable abysses of silence," to be able to feel "that final music or that silence that underlies All"

(172). Beckett emerges from the pens of his two earliest critics as having done justice to this aspiration – as the poet of silence, the peerless exponent of literary negativity, and the provider of a fiction-oriented paradigm for the theory to come.

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"MEMORY IS THE BELLY OF THE MIND":
Augustine's Concept of Memory in Beckett

Michiko Tsushima

It is not only Proustian memory but also Augustinian memory that is important in understanding memory in Beckett. In his early period Beckett showed an interest in Augustinian memory, especially the idea that memory is a stomach for the mind, and remembering is analogous to rumination. This article shows how this aspect of Augustinian memory is evoked in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *How It Is*. Further it develops an understanding of Beckettian memory as an externalized container of the past (e.g., a tape-recorder and a sack) and discusses it in relation to Anzieu's concept of "the Skin Ego" as a psychical container.

1. Introduction

The theme of memory in Beckett's work has often been discussed in relation to the idea of memory in Proust. The "involuntary memory" that Beckett discusses in his book on Proust has been especially stressed. In *Proust*, Beckett observes that unlike "voluntary memory," which is based on our will and intelligence, "involuntary memory" can evoke the past in its fullness through some immediate and fortuitous act of perception that is related to bodily perception. In the same way that the "long-forgotten taste of a madeleine steeped in an infusion of tea" transports the narrator to a whole lost paradise of childhood in Proust, bodily perception transports Beckettian characters to their past and enables them to relive their past.

Yet it is not only Proustian memory but also Augustinian memory that is important to understanding memory in Beckett's work. In Augustine, that which grounds the self is found not in reason or the intellect but in the memory, or to be more concrete, in the process of searching for God through the act of remembrance. Similarly, in Beckett (as well as in Proust), the basis of subjectivity is found in the memory. Memory and life are inseparable in both Augustine and Beckett. Here we should also note that the aspect of Augustinian memory that attracted Beckett was not necessarily related to Augustine's

philosophical beliefs. Rather, it seems that, for Beckett, Augustine's work, especially the *Confessions*, is a kind of source from which he takes interesting phrases and sentences that he later transforms and incorporates into his own work. We recall Beckett's interest in "the shape of ideas" in the sentence he presumed to be by Augustine: "Do not despair; one of the thieves was saved. Do not presume; one of the thieves was damned" (see Cronin, 232).

In this article I would like to focus on two aspects of Augustinian thought that interested Beckett: namely, (1) Augustine's idea that memory is different from the mind, and (2) his idea that memory is a stomach for the mind, and the act of remembering resembles that of ruminating, or chewing food over again.[1] I will look at *Krapp's Last Tape* in terms of both of these ideas and *How It Is* in terms of the second idea.

2. Beckett's Interest in Augustinian Memory

According to Knowlson, before writing *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*, Beckett "immersed himself deeply in the *Confessions* of St. Augustine" and used many quotations from this work in his novel (Knowlson, 114). In a letter to MacGreevy of 1931, Beckett described himself as "phrase-hunting in St. Augustine." He read the *Confessions* in the translation of E.B. Pusey, and from time to time consulted the Latin original (See Beckett 1999, 11). In the *Dream* notebook, the notebook that he kept between 1930 and 1932, we find many quotations from the *Confessions*. The most relevant to our discussion is the following:

> [1] Mind not memory:
> When with joy I remember my past sorrow, the mind hath joy, the memory hath sorrow; the mind upon the joyfulness which is in it, is joyful, yet the memory upon the sadness which is in it, is not sad. ... The memory is the belly [ticked] of the mind & joy & sadness the sweet and bitter food; which, when committed to the memory, are, as it were, passed into the belly, where they may be stowed, but cannot taste.
> (Augustine, qtd. in Beckett 1999, 25-26)

This is a famous passage from book 10, chapter 14, of *The Confessions*. As the phrases underlined by Beckett suggest, he pays attention to two aspects of memory described by Augustine. First, we see that Beckett is

interested in the idea that the memory is different from the mind. While the mind is affected by what is in it, the memory is not affected by what is in it. Indeed, Beckett modifies the first half of the quote and incorporates it into *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* and *More Pricks than Kicks* (81):

> After a moment's hesitation he [Belacqua] stated his absurd dilemma as follows: 'When with indifference I remember my past sorrow, my mind has indifference, my memory has sorrow. The mind, upon the indifference which is in it, in indifferent; yet the memory, upon the sadness which is in it, is not sad.' 'Da capo,' said the Alba. 'When with indifference I remember my past sorrow [...].
>
> (1992, 235-36)

Apparently, what is important for Beckett is that memory is not affected by what is contained in it; the memory is regarded as something insensitive or inhuman like a machine.

Secondly, Beckett pays attention to Augustine's idea that the memory is a stomach for the mind. Augustine writes, "we might say that the memory is a sort of stomach for the mind, and that joy or sadness are like sweet or bitter food" (220). Memory is considered to be a container that stores food. Furthermore, Augustine points out the similarity between the acts of remembering and ruminating: "Perhaps these emotions [desire, joy, fear, and sorrow] are brought forward from the memory by the act of remembering in the same way as cattle bring up food from the stomach when they chew the cud." He depicts the act of remembering as that of "chewing the cud," of 'chewing over' what is stored in memory (221). Thus the *Dream* notebook shows that Beckett was interested in at least two aspects of memory presented in the *Confessions*.

3. 'Chewing the Cud' in *Krapp's Last Tape*
The two aspects of Augustinian memory that we have discussed are evoked in *Krapp's Last Tape*. In this play, which is set in "Krapp's den," a dark place like a cave, a "wearish old man" who is near death tries to record his retrospective of the year on his sixty-ninth birthday, following the custom that he has continued for many years. Before he starts recording, he listens to the tape that he recorded thirty years before. He hears the voice of his younger self who had just turned thirty-

nine. On tape we hear Krapp-at-39 says that he has just been listening to the tape of a still earlier Krapp that was recorded at least ten or twelve years earlier.

On the stage, the audience sees Krapp-at-69 and a tape recorder with reels of tapes. We could say that the former corresponds to the mind and the latter to the memory in Augustine. Krapp, the character who appears on the stage is old and weak. Yet despite his physical limitations, he expresses emotions unrestrainedly; the audience sees him cursing, smiling, laughing, or showing impatience while listening to his voice on tape. In contrast, the tape recorder is insensitive and inhuman, although it is faithful in the sense that it can record and store any words together with pauses, nuance, intonation, and rhythm. It is a memory machine which does not have any emotion. In it past emotions and sensations are neutralized, or in Augustine's words, they "lose taste." Thus we could say that the difference between Krapp-at-69 and the tape-recorder with its reels of tapes corresponds to the difference between mind and memory in Augustine.

The other aspect of Augustinian memory that interested Beckett is that memory is a stomach for the mind, and the act of remembering is analogous to the act of ruminating. In the same way that Augustine regards memory as a stomach that contains past emotions, *Krapp's Last Tape* presents memory as a tape recorder with reels of tapes, that is, as a container which holds past sensations and images. And Krapp's act of listening to his past voice and remembering his past moments can be seen as the act of ruminating. In listening to his past voice, he reflects on his past experiences such as sitting outside by the canal watching his mother's window during her dying days, seeing a vision on a memorable night in March at the end of the jetty, and having his last love affair in a punt drifting in a lake before agreeing to end the relationship. Thus we see the subject who 'chews on' the images of past moments, in other words, the subject who reexperiences past moments retained in his memory.

In this regard, it is important to note that this play begins with Krapp's act of taking out a large banana from a drawer of the table, peeling it and eating it meditatively while pacing to and fro at the edge of the stage. This act of eating a banana suggests that the act of chewing and that of remembering the past are inseparable from each other. Krapp's act of eating a banana at the beginning of the play can be considered as a kind of switch that switches Krapp to a mode of reliving the past. In this mode, he can be liberated from the things in the present,

from the everyday with its depressing realities. Indeed after eating the banana, Krapp starts preparing to listen to the tape of his past. Uttering the word 'spool' with relish and a smile, he starts poking at the boxes and picks up box three, and opening it, peers at the reels inside. Then he takes out spool five and peers at it, and loads it on the tape recorder and rubs his hands in anticipation. It is as if he were about to taste some food. This scene where hearing, taste, touch, and sight are interestingly mingled with each other indicates the analogy between remembering and chewing the cud.

This striking image of eating a banana is repeated in the play, for example, when the voice of Krapp-at-39 says he has just eaten three bananas in his den. The play repeats Krapp's movement of returning to his den, eating bananas, listening to the tape, and recollecting the past. But as Krapp treads on the skin of the banana, slips, and nearly falls at the beginning of the play, this state of indulgence in recollection symbolized by the act of eating bananas is soon destroyed. He is forced to face his present self who is in complete solitude, misery, and despair.

If we consider that the act of eating is a bodily act, the act of remembering, which is inseparable from that of eating in *Krapp's Last Tape,* can also be regarded as a bodily act. Remembering takes place in the body, or to be more specific, in the weak and deteriorating body of Krapp-at-69, the character who physically exists on stage. As Ulrika Maude observes, "what is distinctly Beckettian about the memories is the plainly corporeal nature of the recollections," and, "the past is sedimented in the body itself" (119), so too the act of remembering or ruminating past moments in *Krapp's Last Tape* involves bodily senses, especially touch, taste, and hearing. Indeed, *Krapp's Last Tape* is full of bodily movements involving tactile sensations which are inseparable from the act of remembering; for instance, fumbling in the pockets, feeling about inside the drawer, stroking the banana, rubbing his hands, moving his lips without uttering any sound, touching the banana in the pocket, and so on.

4. Fragmentary Memories in the Sack in *How It Is*

We have seen how in *Krapp's Last Tape* two aspects of Augustinian memory that Beckett paid attention to in his *Dream* notebook are evoked. In *How It Is*, Augustinian memory as a stomach that contains food is found in the image of the sack the man crawling through the mud and the dark carries with him.

How It Is consists of three parts. In part 1 the man takes a journey towards Pim. Finding the sack just after he starts his journey, he describes it as follows: "the sack sole good sole possession coal-sack to the feel small or medium five stone six stone wet jute I clutch it" (8). During his journey, he crawls dragging the sack, which contains tinned fish, such as herring, prawns, and sardines, and a tin-opener. Also he murmurs about his world and the fragmentary memories of life in the light above as he hears it uttered by a voice within him. He can catch what is said inside him in fragments and murmur it forth only when his panting stops. This internal voice was said to be once an external voice heard "quaqua on all sides."

Before discussing the relation between the sack and memory in *How It Is*, we should note that the character crawling in the mud and dark is different from Krapp: whereas Krapp can be regarded as an individual subject who has memories of his past and recollects them, the character in *How It Is* cannot be considered as an individual subject. He is not really differentiated from the maternal mud in which he lies and crawls; the mud, which is depicted as having the "warmth of primeval mud" (11), fills his mouth and engulfs him. Existing either not yet or no longer, he cannot be considered to be a subject with an individual memory. Indeed, in one fragment, talking about the image of a woman (perhaps the mother) who sits watching the man (or boy) working at his table, he says that it is neither a dream nor a memory: "that's all it wasn't a dream I didn't dream that nor a memory I haven't been given memories this time it was an image the kind I see sometimes see in the mud part one sometimes saw" (11). All he does is quote or repeat obscure, fragmentary words heard within him. These internal words concern the previous life in the light, a life before this one, as well as his present life.

In returning to the motif of the sack in *How It Is*, we can say that the sack recalls Augustine's memory as a stomach where food is stored. In this text, at one level the sack is described as something that contains tinned food and a tin-opener, but at another level, it is presented as a container of images, episodes, and scenes of his life in the light above ground. We could say that exactly like a herring and a prawn in the sack that are in "the tins in the depths of the sack hermetically under vacuum [...] for ever sealed" (92), the images of the past life in the light are "hermetically under vacuum [...] for ever sealed" in the tins stored in the sack.

To put it in another way, in *How It Is* we see a parallel between eating the tinned food and recollecting the images of the man's life in the light. During the journey in the mud in part 1, the man opens tins with the tin-opener and eats the food they contain. He also tells us of the fragmentary memories of his life in the light above, in other words, he quotes or repeats what the voice within him says: "past moments old dreams back again [...] memories I say them as I hear them murmur them in the mud" (7). The fragmentary memories of the past that the man quotes take on the form of images. These images of his previous life appear and disappear on the screen of mud. If we think that rumination involves bringing back to the mouth what is contained in the stomach and reexperiencing it, this act of repeating the fragmentary words resembles the act of ruminating. What was once heard outside is internalized, and the man repeats the words as he hears them inside himself and reexperiences these internal words in the form of images. Thus the existence of the sack in *How It Is* involves the act of ruminating on the past.

This sack further reminds us of Winnie's bag in *Happy Days*. The bag is Winnie's sole possession and contains her daily necessities. On the stage she repeats taking them out, using them, and putting them back. In the same manner as Winnie takes out various daily necessities from her bag, she quotes famous lines from classical literature that she remembers imperfectly. At a metaphorical level we can think that Winnie's bag contains words of the past and her act of recollecting them is analogous to that of ruminating.

To return to *How It Is*, it is important to note that the sack is said to be indispensable to the life of the man crawling in the mud. Like the mud, it is something that keeps him going. The man murmurs, "the sack my life that I never let go [...]" (35). We often find him clasping the sack to his belly with his knees drawn up and his back bent in a hoop: "knees drawn up back bent in a hoop I clasp the sack to my belly I see me now on my side I clutch it the sack we're talking of the sack with one hand behind my back I slip it under my head without letting it go I never let it go" (10). This posture reminds us of that of a fetus in the mother's womb. The sack is described as having several uses. It is used as a larder, a pillow for the head, a friend to turn to, a thing to embrace, and a surface to cover with kisses. But there are occasions when it is said to be something far more than these things. In one fragment it is said that the sack is something to cling to, in the same way as the man "who falls out of the window" "clutches [...] the window-sill" (66). The

importance of the sack, the object that we cling to, goes beyond its use-
fulness. The only thing that is sustaining the life of the crawler, the sack
– this container of fragmentary memories – is also the only thing that
remains when everything else is gone (105).

5. The Externalized Container and "the Skin Ego"

We have seen Augustine's concept of memory being evoked in *Krapp's
Last Tape* and *How It Is*. In particular, his idea of memory as a stomach
for the mind, that is to say, the memory as a container of the past is
found in both works. However, whereas in Augustine the memory is
located inside the self, in Beckett the memory as a container of the past
is brought outside the self and thus externalized. In *Krapp's Last Tape*,
the memory appears on the stage as a tape recorder with reels of tapes;
it becomes a machine that can be seen, heard, and touched by the actor
and seen and heard by the audience. In *How It Is*, the memory is sym-
bolized as the sack that the man carries with himself. We can consider
the tape recorder or the sack not merely as an external thing but as a
part of the self, as an externalized form of what is inside the self. To be
more precise, it is an externalized form of a mental image of memory.

Didier Anzieu's concept of "the Skin Ego," in particular its con-
taining function, can help us understand such an image of memory.
Anzieu defines "the Skin Ego" as "a mental image of which the Ego of
the child makes use during the early phases of its development to repre-
sent itself as an Ego containing psychical contents, on the basis of its
experience of the surface of the body" (40). For Anzieu, one of the
seven functions of "the Skin Ego" is "the containing function." In this
function, the young child has a mental representation of itself as a psy-
chical container, a psychical envelope, or a containing sac; it is called
"the sac Skin Ego" (107).[2] Writing that "The sensation/image of the
skin as sac is awakened, in the very young infant, by the attention to its
bodily needs it receives from its mother," Anzieu explains that the men-
tal representation of "the Skin Ego" originates from the interplay be-
tween the mother's body and the infant's (101). And, referring to René
Kaës's view, Anzieu says one aspect of this function is that the con-
tainer forms "a passive receptacle where the baby may store its sensa-
tions/images/affects, which in this way, are neutralized and preserved"
(101). Thus Anzieu points out the existence of an archaic topology in
which the Ego of the young child becomes aware of the existence of
itself and acquires a mental representation of the skin as the sac which
contains and retains psychical contents.

If we look at memory in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *How It Is* in light of "the Skin Ego," we might be able to say that the memory as the container of the past corresponds to "the sac Skin Ego," a mental representation of an Ego as a psychical container. In this sense, the tape recorder in *Krapp' Last Tape* or the sack in *How It Is* should not be considered merely as things that are external to the human being. They could be regarded as something like the mental representation of an Ego as the sac or a psychical container. In Beckett, the psychical container goes outside of the human being and reveals itself as a tangible thing that contains past images. The memory located inside the body in what Augustine termed "a stomach for the mind" is placed outside the body. In this regard, we could say that the memory shown as a container of the past in Beckett transgresses the boundary separating interior and exterior. Significantly, in *Krapp's Last Tape* and *How It Is*, this container of past images is presented as the sole possession of Beckett's characters and the only thing that sustains their lives.

Notes

1.   For a discussion of Augustine's theory of memory, see, for example, Bourke (142-65), O'Connell (120-34), Rist (73-85), and Teske (148-58).

2.   The idea of the psychical container in Anzieu comes from Wilfred Ruprecht Bion who was Beckett's analyst at the Tavistock Clinic. See, for instance, Anzieu, 38-39, 101.

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NARRATEURS ET ENTENDEURS
DANS LES ŒUVRES ROMANESQUES
ET THÉÂTRALES DE SAMUEL BECKETT

Yo Fujiwara

A character who tells or listens to a story is one of the most frequently encountered figures in Beckett's texts. But at the same time, even as they appear totally immersed in their narratives, the fictional narrators feel out of sync with their own narrations. Why go on telling and listening? What is the relation between a personage and his or her narrative? In this article I examine two series of texts in order to address these questions: the fictional works of the forties and the theatrical works of the seventies and eighties.

"Je ne sais pas pourquoi j'ai raconté cette histoire. J'aurais pu tout aussi bien en raconter une autre. Peut-être qu'une autre fois je pourrai en raconter une autre. Ames vives, vous verrez que cela se ressemble" (1958c, 37). Comme le signalent ces dernières lignes de "L'expulsé," le narrateur dans l'œuvre de Samuel Beckett se met souvent à distance de son récit. Néanmoins, et bien qu'il exprime sans cesse son indifférence, sa difficulté et son incapacité à narrer, il sent qu'il y a toujours, comme le dit le narrateur de cette nouvelle, "une autre histoire" à raconter. Dans *Malone meurt* par exemple, le protagoniste se pose d'entrée de jeu comme étant un écrivain qui entreprend de raconter des histoires. Il en est de même dans les dernières œuvres. Le personnage de *Compagnie*, par exemple, entend la 'voix' qui transmet par intermittence des bribes de son histoire, le récit restant toujours ainsi une des composantes essentielles du texte beckettien.

À quoi tient cette persistance, et quel est le rapport du personnage avec son récit? Très vite après la publication consécutive des romans de la trilogie au début des années cinquante, et jusqu'à aujourd'hui, cette insistance sur la narration est restée une des interrogations centrales pour les critiques. Dans un article de 1953, intitulé "Où maintenant? Qui maintenant? " Maurice Blanchot s'intéressait déjà à cette question: "Pourquoi ces histoires vaines? Pour meubler le vide où Malone sent qu'il tombe; par angoisse de ce temps vide qui va devenir le temps infi-

ni de la mort; pour ne pas laisser parler ce temps vide, et le seul moyen
de le faire taire, c'est de l'obliger à dire coûte que coûte quelque chose,
à dire une histoire" (288). En 1969, dans son *Beckett par lui-même*,
Ludovic Janvier fait également appel à cet aspect protecteur du récit:
"Qu'en est-il du statut de l'histoire, en effet? Elle est d'abord de diver-
tir, de reculer quelque chose d'imminent et qui, par l'effet de la fiction,
avec ses êtres et son temps propres, demeure comme en suspens dans
les limbes du destin humain" (97).

Les deux critiques ont sans conteste raison de faire remarquer ce
caractère défensif du récit. Comme le personnage de "Le calmant" se
raconte une histoire "pour essayer de (se) calmer" (40), dans certaines
de ses œuvres, c'est le personnage lui-même qui considère le récit
comme étant une ressource contre le vide, le silence. Mais ce qu'il faut
ajouter à cette idée du récit protecteur, c'est que le personnage n'a pas
toujours la maîtrise de sa narration, et que le récit, nous semble-t-il,
n'est pas forcément ancré dans la parole du personnage.

Deux séries de textes feront notamment l'objet de notre analyse.
Dans un premier temps, nous examinerons les nouvelles et les romans
de la première trilogie. Dans ces œuvres rédigées après la guerre, et
comme en témoigne cette interrogation de Malone: "Mais je me dis tant
de choses, qu'y a-t-il de vrai dans ce babil?" (1951, 102), distinguer le
vrai du faux constitue une des préoccupations dont le narrateur ne peut
se défaire. Et c'est avec ce souci de vérité qu'il ne cesse de remettre en
cause son récit qu'il ne nomme jamais autrement que 'des histoires.'
Dans un second temps, nous traiterons les œuvres théâtrales des années
soixante-dix et quatre-vingt: *Solo*, *Berceuse* et *Impromptu d'Ohio*. Dans
ces trois pièces, le récit que l'on entend raconter sur scène donne
l'impression que nous sommes en train d'assister à la récitation d'un
texte qui a été écrit par avance. Et avec l'aspect machinal de la narra-
tion, son aspect 'préenregistré,' le personnage qui raconte ou écoute son
récit nous semble entièrement passif. Or, ces deux séries de textes,
quoique appartenant à ces genres différents que sont le roman et le
théâtre, et bien qu'il y ait un décalage temporel dans leur rédaction – les
romans en question datent des années quarante; les pièces, des années
soixante-dix et quatre-vingt – se distinguent par leur narration au passé
simple. Leur confrontation devrait donc nous permettre d'éclaircir une
forme narrative que l'on retrouve dans deux types de personnage chers
à Beckett: le narrateur et 'l'entendeur.'

Le souci de vérité dans les œuvres romanesques des années quarante

Les nouvelles et les romans de la trilogie rédigés en français dans les années quarante sont tous composés de façon similaire, avec au centre un personnage qui entreprend de raconter une histoire. Comme le dit le personnage dans "Le calmant": "Je vais donc me raconter une histoire" (39). Le personnage se pose donc d'entrée de jeu comme un narrateur: 'je.' Mais malgré cette volonté affirmée d'emblée, il éprouve de plus en plus fréquemment un malaise à l'égard de son récit, de telle sorte que le narrateur, dans *L'innommable*, n'est plus en mesure de commencer son histoire alors que c'était encore le cas pour les personnages précédents.

"Tout cela ce sont des mensonges, je le sens" (1958a, 78). Déjà dans "La fin," la première nouvelle rédigée en français après la guerre, le narrateur dénonce avec fermeté la fausseté du récit qu'il est en train de narrer.[1] La valeur de vérité est de fait un des éléments essentiels qui détermine la mise en forme de l'histoire dans les œuvres romanesques de cette époque, et tous les états psychologiques que le narrateur exprime au cours de sa narration – malaise, répulsion, indifférence, aspiration – ne sont jamais étrangers à ce doute quant à ce qui sépare le vrai du faux.

Examinons d'abord le rapport du narrateur avec son récit dans *Molloy* et *Malone meurt*. Dans ces deux premiers romans de la trilogie, le narrateur exprime, certes, sa volonté de raconter "des histoires." Le narrateur de *Malone meurt* dit en effet: "D'ici là je vais me raconter des histoires, si je peux" (1951, 8). Mais malgré ce propos, le narrateur, tout en racontant effectivement "des histoires," se sent néanmoins décalé par rapport à sa propre narration. Dans la deuxième partie de *Molloy*, se retournant sur les personnages des récits qu'il est censé avoir écrits dans le passé, le narrateur ne cache pas son trouble: "Oh je pourrais vous raconter des histoires, si j'étais tranquille. Quelle tourbe dans ma tête, quelle galerie de crevés. Murphy, Watt, Yerk, Mercier et tant d'autres. Je n'aurais jamais cru que – si, je le crois volontiers. Des histoires, des histoires. Je n'ai pas su les raconter. Je n'aurai pas su raconter celle-ci" (1994, 187). Le narrateur considère ainsi les personnages des récits antérieurs comme une "tourbe," une "galerie de crevés," et il évoque, avec répulsion, ce qui n'est jamais que "des histoires." Et comme il le dit à la fin: "Je n'aurai pas su raconter celle-ci," c'est toujours tout en gardant ses distances que le narrateur fait allusion au récit qu'il est en train de narrer.

Malone meurt présente un écart similaire. Dans ce roman, étant donné que l'œuvre se compose en gros de trois types de discours: "la situation présente"; "des histoires"; "l'inventaire" – suivant en cela le programme d'écriture qu'a annoncé d'emblée le narrateur – le récit ne constitue qu'une partie des paragraphes qui se développent en alternance avec d'autres types de discours. Mais outre cette progression intermittente, l'unité du récit, avec sa remise en cause répétée, se défait à l'intérieur même de sa narration: "Sapo n'avait pas d'amis. Non, ça ne va pas. [...] Sapo était bien avec ses petits camarades, sans en être exactement aimé" (1951, 24-25). Dans ce passage, dès le commencement du paragraphe, la narration s'arrête. En disant: "Non, ça ne va pas," le narrateur se met à l'écart de son récit. Et cette mise à distance, comme on le sait, sera signalée à plusieurs reprises par d'autres propositions de même nature: "Quel ennui"; "Quelle misère."

Or, à l'encontre de ce mouvement de mise à distance que le narrateur exprime dans les deux premiers romans de la trilogie, le narrateur de *L'innommable* essaie d'être plus près de son récit. Car, à en croire cette déclaration du narrateur: "C'est maintenant que je vais parler de moi, pour la première fois" (1953, 28), c'est cette fois 'une histoire vraie' qui fait l'objet de son exigence: "Mais quant à traiter cette histoire un peu à fond, avec autant d'inutile ardeur que par exemple celle du soumis, que j'espérais la mienne, proche de la mienne, le chemin de la mienne, je n'y ai jamais songé. Et si j'y songe à présent, c'est que mon histoire à moi, je désespère de l'atteindre" (1953, 42). Ce que le narrateur appelle "cette histoire" dans ce passage n'est plus une de celles qu'il a considérées comme "des histoires," mais "mon histoire à moi." Et cette histoire, "que j'espérais la mienne, proche de la mienne, le chemin de la mienne," c'est avec le mouvement de 'se rapprocher' que le narrateur en évoque le récit, et cela tout en sachant la distance qu'il garde avec elle. Prenons encore un exemple dans lequel le narrateur situe son récit hors de sa portée. Il s'agit d'un passage extrait des dernières pages:

> [...] il faut vite essayer, avec les mots qui restent, essayer quoi, je ne sais plus, ça ne fait rien, je ne l'ai jamais su, essayer qu'ils me portent dans mon histoire, les mots qui restent, ma vieille histoire, que j'ai oubliée, loin d'ici, à travers le bruit, à travers la porte, dans le silence, ça doit être ça, c'est trop tard, c'est peut-être trop tard, c'est peut-être déjà fait, comment le savoir, je ne le saurai

jamais, dans le silence on ne sait pas, c'est peut-être la porte, je
suis peut-être devant la porte, ça m'étonnerait […]

                                                              (1953, 211-12)

Comme le dit le narrateur: "il faut vite essayer, avec les mots qui res-
tent, […] essayer qu'ils me portent dans mon histoire," c'est toujours
avec la même aspiration à se rapprocher d'elle qu'il parle de son his-
toire. Et ce qui est à souligner dans ces lignes, c'est que le narrateur,
même s'il ajoute: "ça m'étonnerait," suppose qu'il est bien devant cette
"porte" qui donne accès à son histoire, et qu'il suggère, ayant fait cette
supposition, une réduction de la distance.

      Le rapport du narrateur avec son récit dans les œuvres romanes-
ques des années quarante se définit ainsi par ces deux mouvements:
's'écarter' et / ou 'se rapprocher.' D'une part, dans les deux premiers
romans de la trilogie, le narrateur raconte, certes, quelque chose que
nous pouvons appeler une histoire. Mais puisque ce sont "des histoi-
res," 'des inventions,' il lui faut les écarter, les éloigner. D'autre part,
dans *L'innommable*, le récit que le narrateur considère comme "mon
histoire" est ce dont, tout en désespérant de l'atteindre, il ne cesse de
tenter de se rapprocher. Mais dans ce rapport qui est conditionné par le
critérium de vérité, comment expliquer la persistance "des histoires,"
comment rendre compte de l'impossibilité de raconter 'une histoire
vraie'?

      "Et voilà en effet que je glisse déjà, avant d'être à la dernière ex-
trémité, vers les secours de la fable" (1953, 36). Le narrateur de
L'innommable se voit ainsi entraîner vers "la fable," sans doute par la
force attractive du récit. Et ce glissement nous laisse supposer ce qui est
véritablement en jeu sous l'acte simple de narrer. Déjà dans *Malone
meurt*, le narrateur, tout en écoutant sa propre voix comme si c'était
celle d'un autre, prend conscience de l'altérité de la voix narrative: "Je
m'entendrai de loin, l'esprit loin, parler des Louis, parler de moi,
l'esprit errant, loin d'ici, parmi ses ruines" (1951, 69), ce qui suppose la
distance entre un ailleurs d'où provient le récit et un ici où se trouve le
personnage de 'l'entendeur.' Raconter, dans cette perspective, ne dif-
fère qu'insensiblement de l'acte d'entendre.

      C'est en observant les trois œuvres théâtrales des années soixante-
dix et quatre-vingt: *Solo*, *Berceuse* et *Impromptu d'Ohio*, que nous
tenterons d'examiner à présent ce qu'est le récit pour le personnage de
l''entendeur.' Certes, comme en témoigne *Impromptu d'Ohio* qui met
en scène deux personnages presque identiques, le Lecteur et

l'Entendeur, l'intérêt de ces œuvres nous semble résider à la fois dans la narration et dans l'audition. Mais en tenant compte d'une altérité persistante – nous allons le voir – de la voix narrative, tous les personnages dans ces dernières pièces nous semblent revêtir le caractère passif de 'l'entendeur.'

L'altérité de la voix narrative dans les dernières œuvres théâtrales
À la différence du narrateur dans les œuvres romanesques des années quarante, les personnages dans les trois pièces: *Solo*, *Berceuse* et *Impromptu d'Ohio* nous semblent indifférents vis-à-vis de leur récit. Dans toutes ces pièces, ils n'expriment jamais leur volonté de raconter une histoire et restent étrangers à toute évaluation concernant sa véracité. Tout comme si le récit ne les concernait pas vraiment, nous ne retrouvons chez eux aucune approche vers 'une histoire vraie' ni aucun rejet d''une histoire' parce qu'elle serait 'fausse.' Néanmoins, malgré cette inexpressivité apparente, il n'en reste pas moins que le rapport des personnages avec leur récit 'manque d'aplomb,' et que nous reconnaissons également dans ces dernières pièces, les deux mouvements – 's'écarter' et / ou 'se rapprocher' – que nous venons de dégager à propos des romans de la trilogie.

Soulignons premièrement le fait que la distance entre les personnage et leur récit est inscrite dans la composition même de l'œuvre. Dans le cas de *Berceuse*, la distance est d'abord, du fait de la mise en scène, d'ordre spatial. À part le "Encore" et le "*temps qu'elle finisse*," la femme dans la berceuse este silencieuse et se laisse bercer en écoutant "sa voix enregistrée" (41-42). Dans cette pièce, à cause du dédoublement de la voix (d'une part la voix vivante du personnage scénique, d'autre part sa voix enregistrée qui se charge de la narration – la voix-off), la source du récit se voit de fait transférer à un ailleurs dans le noir. Ainsi arrachée au personnage sur scène, la voix narrative nous semble acquérir une sorte d'autonomie. Ensuite, dans le cas de *Solo* et *Impromptu d'Ohio*, le récit étant effectivement raconté par le personnage scénique, l'altérité de la voix narrative est certes moins saillante que dans le cas de *Berceuse*. Cependant, comme le personnage de *Solo* est désigné comme "récitant" (29) dans sa didascalie, et que la narration d'*Impromptu d'Ohio* consiste entièrement en la lecture d'un livre posé sur la table, la narration est considérée comme secondaire – récit 'de seconde main.' Dans ces deux pièces, la source du récit ne serait ainsi pas totalement imputée au personnage sur scène, et cet écart est également souligné par l'allure machinale de leur récitation. Enfin, dans les

trois pièces, le choix des temps verbaux explique aussi la distance entre les personnages et leur récit. Comme nous l'avons indiqué au début de notre analyse, le récit dans ces trois pièces se distingue par son emploi du passé simple. Ce temps du verbe, qui se caractérise d'abord par un décrochage par rapport au présent de l'énonciation, revêt aussi le signe de l'impersonnalité. "Personne ne parle ici; les événements semblent se raconter eux-mêmes" (Benveniste, 241). Comme le dit Benveniste dans son article consacré à l'analyse des temps verbaux, un récit à la troisième personne raconté au passé simple est censé être détaché de l'intention de celui qui raconte.

Ainsi reconnaissons-nous ici aussi le mouvement – 's'écarter' et / ou 'se rapprocher' – que nous avons dégagé plus haut. À la différence du narrateur de *L'innommable* qui voulait s'approcher de son histoire, c'est cette fois le récit qui nous semble traverser la scène pour passer et repasser par l'oreille du personnage scénique. En ce qui concerne *Berceuse* et *Impromptu d'Ohio*, l'écart et le rapprochement du récit se retrouvent dans l'alternance de l'arrêt et du recommencement de la narration. Dans ces deux pièces en effet, la narration s'arrête au bout d'un moment et le personnage réagit, quoique de manière minime, à ce silence. En disant: "Encore," la femme dans la berceuse lance quatre fois un appel pour que le récit reprenne.[2] Dans *Impromptu d'Ohio*, en frappant à plusieurs reprises sur la table, l'Entendeur fait signe d'arrêter ou de reprendre la récitation. Ainsi, le récit qui était parti ailleurs et était resté lointain durant le silence, revient sur scène, et s'approche de l'oreille de celui qui l'écoute. Par ailleurs, lorsque la femme dans *Berceuse* superpose sa voix vivante à la voix narrative enregistrée en disant *"temps qu'elle finisse,"* les deux voix se rejoignent, comblant ainsi, quoique de façon momentanée, la distance aussi bien que, pourrait-on dire, le silence.

La coïncidence et le décalage qui s'établissent entre le contenu du récit et la situation du personnage scénique donnent également, ajoutons-le, cette impression de mouvement qui 's'écarte' et / ou 'se rapproche.' Dans les trois pièces, comme le récit est raconté au passé simple et à la troisième personne, le personnage dans le récit est censé être détaché de l'ici-maintenant des personnages scéniques. Cependant, il y a des moments où ce que l'on entend dans le récit s'accorde à ce que l'on voit sur la scène. Dans le cas de *Solo*, lorsque le récitant dit: "S'écarte jusqu'à l'orée de la lumière et se tourne face au mur. Ainsi chaque nuit. Debout. Fenêtre. Lampe" (31), ce passage du récit coïncide avec la situation du récitant qui est debout sur scène. Quant à *Im-*

promptu d'Ohio, la situation des deux personnages scéniques corres-
pond parfaitement à la séquence du récit: "Ainsi la triste histoire une
dernière fois redite ils restèrent assis comme devenus de pierre" (66).
Dans *Berceuse*, notamment, comme la voix narrative évoque de plus en
plus fréquemment le balancement de la berceuse, la coïncidence du
récit et du personnage scénique nous semble de plus en plus prégnante.
Ainsi, dans les trois pièces, et malgré la distance qu'entraîne le choix de
la troisième personne et du passé simple, il y a des moments où le pas-
sage du récit coïncide, selon donc un mouvement du type 'se rappro-
cher,' avec la situation scénique.

L'enjeu de ces trois pièces semble donc se situer dans ces passages
allant d'une coïncidence à une mise à distance ou inversement, qui
s'établissent entre le personnage et son récit. Par son choix du passé
simple ainsi que de la troisième personne comme dispositif narratif, le
récit est, certes, détaché – sur le plan linguistique – du personnage sur
la scène. Cependant, comme la situation du personnage scénique cor-
respond, à certains moments, à celle du personnage du récit, ou encore
que le personnage scénique lance un appel pour que le récit revienne au
cœur du silence, nous reconnaissons là une coïncidence entre le récit et
le personnage scénique. Ce qui se passe dans ces dernières pièces, c'est
ainsi un va-et-vient, un 'rapprochement' et / ou un 'éloignement' inces-
sants du récit, et cela à l'encontre de la quasi-immobilité du personnage
scénique.

La reconnaissance d'une distance par rapport à son récit: tel est ce
que partagent le narrateur et 'l'entendeur' dans les œuvres romanesques
et théâtrales de Beckett. Soit qu'il exprime sa volonté de narrer, soit
qu'il reste passif à l'égard de son récit, le personnage se sent toujours
décalé par rapport à sa propre narration.

La persistance du récit dans l'œuvre de Beckett s'explique ainsi
par cette altérité de la voix narrative. Le récit, comme la 'voix' qui ré-
sonne par intermittence dans les oreilles du personnage, ne cesse de
's'approcher' et de 's'éloigner' du narrateur aussi bien que de
'l'entendeur.' Et toutes les œuvres qui mettent au centre un personnage
qui raconte ou qui écoute un récit ont pour objet de figurer cet aspect
mouvant de la forme narrative.

"Je ne sais pas pourquoi j'ai raconté cette histoire" (1958c, 37).
Déjà dans les œuvres romanesques des années quarante, le narrateur
percevait cette altérité de la voix narrative. Ainsi n'est-ce pas tant le
personnage qui raconte son récit que le récit qui se raconte, intermina-
blement, en lui ou en dehors de lui selon un va-et-vient – 's'éloigner,'

'se rapprocher' –, tout comme, dans *Berceuse*, le mouvement au rythme duquel se balance la femme est indépendant du personnage scénique: "Faible. Lent. Réglé mécaniquement sans l'aide de F" (54).

Notes

1.   Le narrateur de *L'innommable* remet en cause ses propres paroles presque de la même façon: "Tout ça c'est des mensonges" (208).

2.   Il ne faut pas prendre ce "Encore" pour une expression négative. Dans la version anglaise qui précède celle en français, c'est "More" qui correspond à "Encore," ce qui ne laisse donc aucune équivoque.

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ECHOES OF BERGSONIAN VITALISM
IN SAMUEL BECKETT'S EARLY WORKS

Manfred Milz

From 1889 to 1934, Henri Bergson differentiated between two aspects of a dynamic naturalism: on the one hand, a rationalized "homogeneous duration" that quantifies a dissected reality by means of symbolisation, and on the other hand, intuited "heterogeneous moments" that dissolve symbols in representing continuously interpenetrating elements qualitatively. These concurring vitalistic conceptions, one of an intellectual, the other of an intuitive nature, can equally be detected in Beckett's attempts to integrate being into art. This comparative inquiry examines resonances of Bergson's vitalism as residual elements of his fading influence in Beckett's early works.

1. A Dialogue between Art and Philosophy

Ever since the turn of the nineteenth century, French literature and philosophy have entered into a dialogue with the aim of synthesising verbal conceptions and existential vitalism. This dialogue was aligned with efforts to revive the *philosophe-écrivain* of the eighteenth century in the tradition of Voltaire and Rousseau and their crossing and recrossing of the border between philosophy and literature.

The descendants of these revolutionary thinkers gave birth to a generation of intellectual nomads intent on doing away with traditional borders. Henri Bergson's central argument that a reality that is in flux cannot be adequately characterised by the stable conceptions of the human mind became common ground among philosophers and writers as well as painters and composers in the first part of the twentieth century. This climate of opinion, which initiated a dialogue across disciplines, constitutes one of the philosophical sources of Beckett's early literary compositions. Indeed, James Joyce and Samuel Beckett worked under the slowly fading influence of Bergsonian ontology.

This comparative study deals with the influence of Bergsonian process metaphysics on Beckett's oeuvre from 1929 to 1936. In these early works, we find an intuited vitalism positioned against the mechanistic worldview of a calculating intellect. How and why did Beckett

become attracted to Bergson's metaphysics,[1] or, in other words: How did it become possible for Beckett – under the influence of Bergson – to develop iconoclastic structures in his early writing?[2]

2. Beckett's Early Theoretical Writings as a Critique of "Homogeneous Duration"

Beckett developed his intuitionist, or process-informed, thinking through two encounters with Bergsonian ideas during the second half of the 1920s: one took place at Trinity College Dublin (TCD), the other at the École normale supérieure (ENS) in Paris. Arthur Aston Luce, the author of the Donellan lectures on the philosophy of Bergson, was Beckett's tutor at TCD from 1923 to 1927 (Knowlson, 22). From Luce, Beckett may well have received Bergsonian notions influencing his dedication to dynamism and later to negating and subtracting. From 1928 to 1930, Beckett worked as a *lecteur d'anglais* at the ENS, where Bergson had studied for three years (from 1878 to 1881) and where he had taught in 1898 between his major publications *Matière et mémoire* (1896) and *L'évolution créatrice* (1907). In 1927, a year before Beckett would take up his assignment in Paris, Bergson was awarded the Nobel Prize, an award that provoked controversies among scholars. Being in Paris at the end of the 1920s, Beckett was exposed to an intellectual climate still digesting the ideas of Bergson whose influence from this point on slowly faded in the advent of French existentialism.

Although the influence of Bergson's philosophy on the arts diminished around 1930,[3] Beckett's confrontation with Bergsonian ideas – based on either primary or secondary sources – influenced to a considerable degree his view of writing. The vitalist concepts that Bergson initiated some three to four decades earlier, beginning with his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889), continued to inform the climate of opinion at the time of Beckett's early theoretical works. Among these concepts Bergson describes a "qualitative multiplicity" of "heterogeneous moments" that intermingle below the conscious level's "numerical multiplicity" of "homogeneous duration": "Au-dessous de la durée homogène [...] une psychologie attentive démêle une durée dont les moments hétérogènes se pénètrent; au-dessous de la multiplicité numérique des états conscients, une multiplicité qualitative; au-dessous du moi aux états bien définis, un moi où succession implique fusion et organisation" (Below homogeneous duration [...] a close psychological analysis distinguishes a duration whose heterogeneous moments permeate one another; below the numerical multiplicity of conscious states, a

qualitative multiplicity; below the self with well-defined states, a self in which *succeeding each other* means *melting into one another* and forming an organic whole; 1913, 97; 2001, 128; emphasis added). As Arthur Aston Luce writes in his 1921 lectures on Bergsonian intuition, Bergson attempts to circumscribe the problem of "the meaning that gives vitality and unity to what we see as an assemblage of lifeless parts" (23). Similarly, in "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce" (1929), Beckett emphasises that Joyce does not represent an object in the flux of being by means of static, symbolic forms of expression: "Here words are not the polite contortions of 20th century printer's ink. They are alive. They elbow their way on to the page, and glow and blaze and fade and disappear" (28).

A Bergsonian "qualitative multiplicity" appears in Beckett's essay on Joyce, in which he extends his interest to the theories of Giordano Bruno and Giambattista Vico to examine Joyce's *Work in Progress* and to develop eventually his own literary technique. For Bergson and Bruno, the process an object is exposed to consists of a becoming that simultaneously fades away. Vico's cyclical theorem (a sinus-wave of *corso* and *ricorso*), to which Beckett refers in his 1929 essay, too, holds that from interval to interval, a turning point is reached, where the maximum of decline and the minimum of rise are identical. As Beckett already noted at the time, Vico's *coincidentia oppositorum*, characterising a succession of stages, corresponds to Bruno's earlier teachings, for example, in *Spaccio della bestia trionfante* (1584): "The beginning, the middle, and the end; the birth, the growth, and the completion of everything we see proceed from opposites, through opposites, in opposites, to opposites; and wherever opposites exist, there likewise exist action and reaction, movement, diversity, variety, order, gradation, succession, and change (883; my translation).

Agreeing with Bruno and Vico, Bergson critiques static forms of expression that are unable to represent the continuum of vital matter within time and space. Bergson's fundamental distinction between a "homogeneous duration," in which symbols – linguistic as well as pictorial – are sharply differentiated from each other, and "heterogeneous moments," which permeate each other without boundaries, rests upon his preference for a vivid language. The impossibility of capturing the object in its very being that Beckett highlights in his defense of Joyce will likewise become one of the essential elements of Beckett's fiction.

Beckett took up the aesthetic relationship between Bergson and Proust in the lectures he delivered on his return to TCD in the fall of 1930, interpreting Proust on the basis of Bergson's conception of time.[4] He also discussed Proust's connection to Bergson in a passage originally placed at the end of his *Proust* essay, in which he differentiates between the intuitionism of the two authors.[5] As we have pointed out, Bergson's criticism is directed against a form of conceptual thinking that results in perceiving movement as sharply distinct states. That is, he contests the tendency of the intellect to dissect movement within the continuum of time and space. In agreement with Bergson's critique, Beckett quotes a passage highlighting Proust's understanding of the intellect's limitation in grasping "heterogeneous moments":

"We imagine that the object of our desire is a being that can be laid down before us, enclosed within a body. Alas! it is the extension of that being to all the points of space and time that it has occupied and will occupy. If we do not possess contact with such a place and with such an hour, we do not possess that being. But we cannot touch all these points." And again: "A being scattered in space and time is no longer a woman but a series of events on which we can throw no light, a series of problems that cannot be solved."

(qtd. in Beckett 1958, 41-42)

Bergson's and Proust's critique of homogeneous juxtapositions may have been influenced by contemporary examples of chronophotographical projections and cinematography. Photographs by Eadweard Muybridge, such as *Descending Stairs and Turning Around* (1884-85), document motion as a continuum of sharply distinct states of being, that is, of a homogeneous juxtaposition of *instantanés*. The understanding of artistic process that Proust and Beckett developed on the basis of the Bergsonian critique of static representations of separate moments necessarily involved a challenge to the type of symbolic representation distorting the actual flow of event(s).

The affinity between Beckett and Bergsonian vitalism, to which we have drawn attention at the early stage in Beckett's theoretical writings, may in part depend on the enthusiastic reception Beckett accorded Schopenhauer throughout his life. Beckett was particularly drawn to a contemplative intuitionism that grasps the continuum of the world's dynamic nature: "'Harmony in discord,' a true and complete represen-

tation of the nature of the world, which keeps on revolving in an immense tumble of countless forms, and maintains itself through constant destruction [...] in countless gradations, yet all only in the abstract " (Schopenhauer 577; my translation).[6] The influence of the Upanishads on Schopenhauer's metaphysics may have contributed to the affinity between his and Bergson's thought, and, as is well known, it is a major source of the Eastern philosophical subtext in Beckett's works.

A still earlier thinker admired by both Bergson and Beckett is Heraclitus of Ephesus whose premise *ta pantha rei* (everything is in flux) convinced Beckett of the impossibility of representing an object in the stream of existence. However, in *L'évolution créatrice* Bergson states that it may be possible 'to perceive the continuum,' that is, 'the absolute' in contemplative states that go beyond language:

> Matter or mind, reality has appeared to us as a perpetual becoming. It makes itself or it unmakes itself, but it is never something made. Such is the intuition that we have of mind when we draw aside the veil which is interposed between our consciousness and ourselves. This, also, is what our intellect and senses themselves would show us of matter, if they could obtain a direct and disinterested idea of it.
>
> (1911, 287-88)

In his first theoretical writings and in his early fiction, Beckett argues both for the impossibility of representation and the possibility of an intuitive perception of the absolute. Once there is no way out of this dilemma, the dilemma itself becomes the topic of his novels. In attempting to dissolve it, Beckett posits an identity between words and the dynamic continuum of nature.

3. Consciously Perceived "Homogeneous Duration" and Nonconsciously Sensed "Heterogeneous Moments" in Beckett's Early Fiction

Cultivating and developing his anti-intellectualism, Beckett transformed philosophical ideas into an amalgam of literary philosophemes in his early fiction. Bergson appears to play a key-role in this process of reception and adaptation. The *philosophe-écrivain* Henri Bergson, favouring a union of life and expression, is one of the nineteenth- century thinkers to give birth to the writer-philosopher Samuel Beckett, who

tells us: "I wouldn't have had any reason to write my novels if I could have expressed their subject in philosophical terms." (qtd. in d'Aubarède 43)

Sharing a discursive formation influenced by Bergsonism with a whole generation of painters, sculptors, composers and writers, Beckett comes remarkably close to the radical philosopher-novelist Bergson describes in his *Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience* (1889):

> Now, if some bold novelist, tearing aside the cleverly woven curtain of our conventional ego, shows us under this appearance of logic a fundamental absurdity, under this juxtaposition of simple states an infinite permeation of a thousand different impressions which have already ceased to exist the instant they are named, we commend him for having known us better than we knew ourselves.
>
> (2001, 133)

The Bergsonian doctrine of two opposite worldviews, the rationalized, relative "homogeneous duration" and the fundamental "heterogeneous moments" sensed by a nonconscious mind, represents the very substance of Beckett's first novel. In mentioning Bergson towards the end of *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* (1932-33), its author explicitly reveals one of its major iconoclastic sources. Bergson becomes the advocate of a novel that appears to destroy itself in an attempt to achieve an identity with the continuum of nature. Significantly, it is the teacher Chas who discusses Bergsonism with his students: "'And if it is the smart thing nowadays to speak of Bergson as a bit of a cod [...] it is that the trend of our modern vulgarity is from the object [...] and the idea to sense [...] and REASON.'" Chas's students start to speculate as to whether their teacher was really referring to *senses* or rather to *common sense*: "'I think', said a third, 'that he meant *instinct,* intuition'" (Beckett 1993, 212; emphasis in original). Wondering about the "absolute" in Bergson, the students find themselves too confused to understand it without the help of their teacher (213).

The desire for an intuited view of a nondissected continuum beyond any intellectual spatial integrations is a common intention shared by Bergson and Beckett. However, Beckett's early protagonists Belacqua and Murphy, who long to establish this ideal state of mind in a union between perception and the object of their desire, fail to do so.

Within their existence they dissociate themselves from it through con-sciousness: "Murphy's mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the universe without. This was not an impover-ishment, for it excluded nothing that it did not itself contain" (Beckett 1973, 63). The physical universe remains a mere projection of their mind, and Beckett's solipsistic monad-characters continue to face a spatialised mental landscape.

Belacqua and Murphy perceive the world in the shadow-figurations conceptualised by Bergson as a "homogeneous duration," a spatialisation of time in which figures are viewed by the functional intellect. Enframed by a 'vanishing becoming,' they appear to be 'ab-sently present.' Beckett expresses this 'absent presence' figuratively by drawing on the cinematoscope-process as a series of *instantanés* (as is the case with Muybridge). In referring to Richard Oswald's 1929 movie, *Der lebende Leichnam* (*The Living Corpse*; 1993, 56), he is simultaneously describing his own protagonists. It is interesting to note that Bergson's critique of homogeneous juxtaposition in chapter 4 of *L'évolution créatrice* (1907) also compares thought to cinematographic mechanisms. In his *chef d'œuvre*'s final chapter, entitled "Le méca-nisme cinématographique de la pensée et l'illusion mécanistique," Bergson writes: "Le mouvement glissera dans l'intervalle, parce que toute tentative pour reconstituer le changement avec des états implique cette proposition absurde que le mouvement est fait d'immobilités" (The movement slips through the interval, because every attempt to reconstitute change out of states implies the absurd proposition that movement is made of immobilities; 1981, 307; 1911, 325).

Furthermore, Beckett echoes the impact the technique of chrono-photography had on paintings by Marcel Duchamp, such as *Nu descen-dant un escalier* (1911), in his staircase-figurations: "Now he is draw-ing nigh, in a spouting and ingurgitation of crassamenta he joins issue with the perron, straining and heaving against the great load of himself he stamps the steps behind him in a cruel flatfooted diagonal, one by one he spurns them out of his path" (1993, 161-62). In this passage, Beckett writes ironically about a movement divided into solidified states of being. Step by step, movement is divided into a series of *in-stantanés*, the "flatfooted diagonal." Belacqua himself is exposed to the *nunc stans,* an essential coherence created and – at the same time – destroyed by moments of being, a miserable existence he reflects on in German: "Beschissenes Dasein beschissenes Dasein Augenblick bitte beschissenes Dasein Augenblickchen bitte beschissenes" (Crappy

dasein crappy dasein just a second please crappy dasein just a little second please crappy, 73; editor's translation).

Bergson first turned to chronophotography as a series of immobile states to produce his paradigm of an intellectualized utilitarian worldview, whereas Duchamp combines the visual image provided by chronophotography with Bergson's intellectual criticism. Aware of this evolution, Beckett synthesises these iconographical incidents into literary images. The quantitative division of sharply distinct existential states is particularly expressed by Belacqua's perception of his girlfriend Smeraldina-Rima. At one point Beckett divides up her name "S.M.E.R.A.L.D.I.N.A.R.I.M.A." letter by letter (82). Further, as if taking Duchamp's representation of a *Jeune Homme triste dans un train* (1911-12) literally, he recommends (in German): "Nicht küssen bevor der Zug hält" (No kissing in moving train; 82).

Whereas the intellectual *vita activa* renders visual sensations of a subdivided flux, an intuitive *vita contemplativa* gives sensual access to the constant becoming of organic life. According to Bergson's essay, "La perception du changement," the vision of artists is disinterested because they are detached in some degree from attention to the business of daily life. They intuit vitality and unity, where a person dedicated to daily life merely perceives an assemblage of lifeless parts (Bergson 1985, 152). The two preconditions for a clear perception in Bergson's theory of vitalism, intuition and the negation of symbolic conceptualization, are also the two chief premises of Beckett's "attempt to let Being into art" (qtd. in Harvey, 435). In "Walking Out," for example, the senses are linked to the natural continuum in an immediate vision of reality, when Belacqua is shown to experience a nonconscious fusion between the self and nature: "One fateful fine Spring evening he paused not so much in order to rest as to have the scene soak through him. [...] and [he] took in the scene, in a sightless passionate kind of way" (1934, 141-42).

Only in such a state of union between an inward and an outward continuum can the absolute be attained. Whereas the Bergsonian principle of relative perception within a "homogeneous duration" paved the way for Beckett's reception of Duchamp, the fundamental perception of "heterogeneous moments" explains why Beckett compares Lucien, a figure in his first novel, to what was thought to be Rembrandt's portrait of his brother in the Louvre:

> He was [...] an efflorescence at every moment, his contours in per-
> petual erosion. Formidable. Looking at his face, you saw the fea-
> tures bloom, as in Rembrandt's portrait of his brother. (Mem.: de-
> velop.) His face surged forward at you, coming unstuck, coming to
> pieces, invading the airs, a red dehiscence of flesh in action. [...]
> Jesus, you thought, it wants to dissolve. Then the gestures [...] un-
> folding and flowering into nothingness, his whole person a stew of
> disruption and flux. And that from the fresh miracle of coherence
> that he presented every time he turned up. How he kept himself
> together is one of those mysteries. [...] he should have become a
> mist of dust in the airs. He was disintegrating bric-à-brac.
>
> (1993, 116-17)[7]

Beckett's transference of the mobility and dehiscence he saw in this
portrait to a literary portrait of Lucien is unlikely to have occurred
without a predisposition shaped by the discursive formation of the
times imbued with Bergson's theories of vitalism. The 'surging' face of
Beckett's portrait, the 'blooming' features, 'flowering' gestures, and his
"stew of disruption and flux" recall Bergson's description of qualitative
duration in *L'évolution créatrice*. For Bergson, 'duration' becomes an
integral part of the vital process of creating a painting (or a portrait):
"La germination et la floraison de cette forme s'allongent en une ir-
rétrécissable durée, qui fait corps avec elles" (The sprouting and flow-
ering of this form are stretched out on an unshrinkable duration, which
is one with their essence; 1981, 340; 1911, 360). Inspired by Bergson-
ian resonances, Beckett in his early works integrates the French phi-
losopher's time theorem into his creative process. In his early fiction,
he attempts to have his characters adjust to the continuous nature of
time and space through a dissolution of the static symbol. The outward,
objective time of conceptualized homogeneous duration is being ques-
tioned to the benefit of a heterogeneity inside the 'I,' that is, an unseg-
mented, interior dynamism. This dynamic identity between subject and
object, between the artist and his art, goes hand in hand with Beckett's
synaesthetic approach.

Notes

1.   On the aesthetic relationship between Bergson and Beckett at a later period, see Barfield and Tew; and Tew.

2.   Owing to lack of space, I am limiting my focus in this essay on the influence of Bergsonian vitalism on Beckett's early texts. For a detailed analysis of parallel structures in Bergson, Buddhism, and Beckett, see the chapter on this topic in my *Samuel Beckett und Alberto Giacometti*.

3.   Bergson's waning influence was extensively explored by Marxist critics, e.g., Georges Politzer and Max Horkheimer.

4.   See Pilling (1997, 237, n. 25) on Rachel Burrows's notes on Beckett's lectures, which are available on microfilm (MIC 60) at Trinity College Dublin.

5.   See Pilling (1997, 237) about Beckett's letter of 14 Oct. 1932 to his publisher Charles Prentice in the Beckett International Foundation, RUL. Pilling states that Beckett had *certainly* read Bergson's major work *L'évolution créatrice*.

6.   For a structural analysis of the works of Beckett and Schopenhauer, see the concise, comparative study by Ulrich Pothast.

7.   Pilling writes that Beckett saw Rembrandt's portrait of his brother in the Louvre (although, as Pilling notes, the identification of the sitter was questioned even at the time) (2004, 240). The portrait, which has been in the Louvre's possession since 1922, is at present on exhibit under a title – *Portrait d'un homme âgé, dit à tort le frère de Rembrandt* – that draws attention to the mistaken identity of the sitter as Rembrandt's brother. Moreover, this painting is now considered to be the work of an imitator of Rembrandt's late style. See the entry "Rembrandt, Imitator of" in the list of works cited. Thanks to Angela Moorjani for the information about the present status of the Louvre's painting.

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Of CLOWNS AND ARTISTS

BECKETT, BÖLL, AND CLOWNS

Mary Bryden

After relating the importance of the moment in Beckett's work to the clownish act's quicksilver moment that reverses or modifies a mood or situation, this essay identifies affiliations between Beckett's work and varieties of clowning which derive not so much from knockabout farce and merriment but rather from containment and introspection, even constraint. In interaction with Heinrich Böll's novel *The Clown*, the essay concentrates upon the tightrope a clown must tread between the familiar and the alien, the vulnerable and the outrageous, the public and the private, a tightrope that is also apparent in significant areas of Beckett's writing.

> "What kind of a man are you?" he asked. "I am a clown," I said, "and I collect moments."
> Böll, *The Clown*

> Moments. Her moments, my moments. [*Pause.*] The dog's moments.
> Beckett, *Krapp's Last Tape*

Moments in Beckett both detain and release. Like musical notes, they pose themselves briefly, only to be superseded by successors or overridden by rivals. Played out, they may be lingered over, as in *Ill Seen Ill Said*, "moment by glutton moment" (97). Yet that playing is itself the engineer of change, as exemplified in *Not I*: "she who but a moment before…but a moment!…could not make a sound…no sound of any kind…now can't stop…imagine!" (220). Ostensibly, moments are impersonal, mere fragments of time; subjectively, moments are hijacked by mood and preoccupation. Hence, Krapp's moments proceed independently but alongside the moments of the dog, avid for the ball, and those unseen, guessed moments of his mother, behind the roller blind. These three sets of moments are independent and yet intersecting and somehow connected with the movements of the sphere, the ball, which

is not apportioned "moments" and yet whose feel Krapp will remember "until my dying day" (60).

The young clown, Hans Schnier, in Heinrich Böll's 1963 novel *Ansichten eines Clowns* (*The Clown*) is similarly strung out between moments. On the one hand, he must constantly invent and improvise his moments, to amuse and startle his public, while on the other hand he must try to counterbalance this with snatched, private moments of restoration: "There are leisure moments for a clown – then he may stretch his legs and know for as long as it takes to smoke half a cigarette what leisure means" (Böll, 93). What, however, does this add up to? Overall, his history of collected moments has somehow contributed to a path so increasingly at variance with that of his brother Leo that the latter asks him over the telephone: "What kind of a man are you?" (240). Hans bids farewell and hangs up the phone. The two men are connected and yet severed. As the novel ends, the penniless Hans imagines Leo's moments, tossing and turning in his seminary bed, subject to a chosen and secure Foucauldian regime of surveillance, recording, and punishment. He himself puts on his clown make-up and walks out into a contrasting zone of uncertainty and transit – the steps of Bonn Railway Station at Carnival time – in order to earn money by singing to passers-by. The present moment is not an auspicious one – nobody notices him – but he launches himself towards a potentially better one: "in an hour, in two or three hours, they would begin to notice me all right" (246).

Böll, who was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature just three years after Beckett's own receipt of the award, includes some brief but significant reference to Beckett in *The Clown*, as will be examined later. Beckett, in turn, respected the writing of Böll. As reported by his interviewer Herbert Mitgang in 1981,[1] Beckett "keeps up with his reading of old friends, such as Kay Boyle, admires the writings of Heinrich Böll and Saul Bellow, but doesn't follow current fashions in literature" (Mitgang, 35). It is easy to establish affinities between the postwar writing of Beckett and Böll. *The Clown* – a painfully searching but often very funny book – is notable for its dissection of a solipsistic quest by a professional clown. In ever-ambivalent relationship with organised religion, he eschews hypocrisy and struggles to survive amid regrets for a past love and a rapidly declining income. As so often in Beckett, the baseline of fortunes is tipping, and yet humour materialises in unexpected forms. Beset, like so many Beckett characters, with a painful leg and difficulties in mobility, Böll's clown ponders not only upon his physical and material insecurities but also upon ideological

and theological conundrums, remarking that: "An artist always carries death with him, like a good priest his breviary" (231).

For Böll's Hans Schnier, the religious has meaning only insofar as it is congruous with the bodily. In this he might be compared with Estragon in *Waiting for Godot*, who cannot summon up interest in Vladimir's preoccupation with discrepancies between Gospel accounts of the thieves crucified with Christ, but who nevertheless identifies with Christ in his stripped, discalced mode:

> VLADIMIR. But you can't go barefoot!
> ESTRAGO. Christ did.
> VLADIMIR. Christ! What's Christ got to do with it? You're not
>   going to compare
>   yourself to Christ!
> ESTRAGON. All my life I've compared myself to him.
>
>   (52)

Schnier, similarly down at heel, recalls being taken by his girlfriend to a meeting of the Group for Progressive Catholics and observing satirically how those present, all earning sizeable salaries, "were busy crocheting themselves loincloths out of Thomas Aquinas, St. Francis of Assisi, Bonaventura and Pope Leo XIII, loincloths which of course failed to cover their nakedness" (11). The gap between parasitical religious commentators and the vulnerable, fleshly focus of that commentary – the body of Christ – is exemplified later by Schnier's evocation of the physical transactions in and around the person of Christ: "No theologian has ever thought of preaching about women's hands in the Gospels: Veronica, Mary Magdalene, Mary and Martha – all those women's hands in the Gospels which treated Christ tenderly" (196). Beckett, according to André Bernold, had a similar attentiveness to hands: "Beckett lui-même accorda toujours aux mains une attention spéciale. Elles font l'objet d'allusions de plus en plus insistantes dans les derniers textes" (Beckett himself always paid special attention to hands. They are the object of increasingly emphatic allusion in the later texts; 72). Indeed, he reports not only that Beckett expressed the wish to have written a play for hands, but also that, in one of his few good memories of *Film*, "Beckett n'avait pas oublié les mains si belles de Buster Keaton" (Beckett had not forgotten how beautiful were Buster Keaton's hands; 72).

In choosing to cast a famous clown in the role of the protagonist in *Film*, it might be supposed that Beckett wished to maximise the comedic potential of these silent transactions with mute humans and subversive small animals. Any ensuing gains to comedy were, in the event, modest. Yet what emerges is a Beckettian visual aesthetic, artfully blurred while nakedly sustained. Keaton's hands are paralleled in *Film*, as Bernold points out, by the hand-curtain held to her face – "fragile et ultime barrière" (fragile, ultimate barrier; 72) – by the beautiful elderly flower lady whom the protagonist meets on the stairs. Beckett's sensitivity to the aesthetic qualities of Keaton's hands underlines that, for him, the clown is also an artist, and one whose appeal may derive from less obvious features than a painted mouth and a gaudy costume.

This distrust of the superficial trappings of clownhood may be seen in the way in which Beckett, having aligned certain features of a clownish persona with Krapp, in *Krapp's Last Tape*, later modified them, toning down the purple nose and reducing the repetitive banana routines. As James Knowlson remarks: "In a balanced production […] neither the comic nor the pathetic aspects of Krapp's appearance and predicament should be lost. Yet the balance is a difficult one to preserve" (1992, xv). For Beckett, comedic ingredients indeed required careful calibration. Not for him were those varieties of clowning which rely on delirious excess. Significantly, having watched a performance given by the great German comic Karl Valentin. in 1937, he concluded with regret that it had been "reduced here and there to knockabout" (qtd. in Knowlson 1996, 259).

It is, perhaps, difficult to conceive of a clown who can dispense with knockabout, who conducts his affairs with quiet restraint. Yet many celebrated clowns of the past hundred years have, in fact, been distinguished by their sense of containment. One such, with whom Beckett was familiar, was the Swiss clown Grock, a man who, while celebrated for his astonishing linguistic, musical and athletic talent, regarded his own act as being modest and uneffusive. In his autobiography, *Life's a Lark*, he attributes the fact that he was not a great success in America to the fact that he was "too simple […], too restrained" (197). This simplicity was not, however, the product of docility or quiescence. On the contrary, it resulted from a careful balancing of potentially explosive elements. In this respect, Grock viewed himself as mirroring the demeanour of his native country: "Switzerland is the calmest country on this earth. But a country full of calmness will always contain plenty of unrest. The calmness of the Swiss is an elemental calm, and

so is its unrest" (23). Some of Grock's comedy relied upon the repetition of catchphrases, such as his trademark "nicht möglich!" (with its corresponding "sans blague!" when performing in French). These duly find their echo in *Dream of Fair to Middling Women*: see, for example, the 'grockery' of the Alba's taunt: "'Sans blahague!' she mocked grockly" (173). Later, advising Peter Hall on directing *Waiting for Godot*, Beckett would recommend the long-drawn-out, Grock-style "*Sans blâââgue*" as the underlying model for delivery of the line "Not really" (Harmon, 4).

Beyond the humorous punctuation provided by catchphrases, however, the hilarity which Grock provoked on stage was often conjured up in a lightning moment, a change of pace, an unexpected *volte-face* which arose seemingly out of nowhere. This performative rhythm – a continuum subjected to interruption; a bloc subjected to dissolution – was attractive to Beckett in more than one artistic context. In his early review of Sean O'Casey's *Windfalls*, he writes: "Mr O'Casey is a master of knockabout in this very serious and honourable sense – that he discerns the principle of disintegration in even the most complacent solidities, and activates it to their explosion. This is the energy of his theatre, the triumph of the principle of knockabout in situation, in all its elements and on all its planes" (1983, 82). For Beckett, then, 'knockabout' is not safely ensconced within the boundaries of the burlesque, but must be permitted to exercise its violent, disintegrative power independently of given situations and contexts. André Bernold discerns a similar instinct within Beckett's deep-felt responses to music and theatre: "Beckett s'intéressait aux états permanents qui changent brusquement, comme s'il avait pu s'y étendre, immobile, et changer avec eux. C'est ainsi, je pense, qu'il aimait la musique, le théâtre" (Beckett was interested in permanent states which abruptly change, as if he could have stretched out motionless on them, and changed along with them. This was, I think, the nature of his love for music and theatre; 41).

One might assume from some of Beckett's remarks on music that he prized it precisely for its crystalline, mathematical abstraction, operating *sine materia*, and there is some justification for this perception. Nevertheless, perhaps a further insight may be gained if one looks beyond music's 'own' immateriality towards the possibility of its material relation with, and impact upon, the listener. If Bernold is right to visualise Beckett lying alongside the performative, somehow delivering himself up 'into' the performative, then its kinetic potency is available not just cerebrally and aurally but in a more organically influent way, while

still being exerted across space. It might be suggested in this context that we could set Beckett's dislike of the "inexorable purposefulness" of Bach (Grindea, 184) against a more fallible, mortal referent to be found in a composer he preferred, Schubert. Böll's clown, Schnier, voices a kindred perception when he muses: "Bach always seems to me like a three-volume work on dogma which fills me with awe. But Schubert and Chopin are as earthly as I myself probably am. I would rather listen to them than anyone else" (49).

The disadvantage of the purposeful, the dogmatic, is that it does not lend itself well to Grockian pauses, accidents or reversals. Grock's performances were full of acts of attempted music. He would sit down at a piano, play some impressive opening flourishes, and then be interrupted repeatedly by obstacles such as collapsing stools, a maddening itch, or officious colleagues. This interruption impacted all the more decisively insofar as it sliced through the sequence that the opening musical bars had prefigured, and imposed its own alternative dynamic. This quicksilver moment of transition or transformation is present in many kinds of humour, and certainly in many of the early silent comedy films admired by Beckett. Gilles Deleuze highlights the recurrence of these micro-shifts in the work of Charlie Chaplin, citing, for example, Chaplin's shoulders, viewed from behind as they shake with apparent grief following his abandonment by his wife. It is only when he turns to face the camera that he is revealed to be shaking a cocktail for himself. Although this instance differs from the Grockian example in that it is the change of viewpoint which effectuates the changed reading of the scene, it nevertheless interrupts and subverts the ongoing transaction between viewer and performer. It is, as Deleuze puts it, "la petite différence qui fait basculer la situation" (the little difference which tips the situation over; 232).

Elsewhere in the same volume on cinema, Deleuze analyses the successive positionings within Beckett's *Film*, such that, in the closing moments, the angle of immunity is transgressed, allowing E to perceive O, and anguish to be counterpointed by attentiveness. As the evader tries to resist his self-perception rounding on him, the question lingers in the mind of the viewer: "Tout s'arrêtera-t-il, même le balancement de la berceuse, quand le double visage glissera dans le néant?" (Will everything stop, even the rock of the rocking-chair, when the double face slips into nothingness? 99). Or will the regarded self find a way of accommodating to his perceivedness?

The idea of this 'double face' is one which also preoccupies the clown in Böll's novel. Although a clown face is often an applied one (the product of a pancake make-up which supplies a ready-made grotesque expression), the facial muscles underneath it, which generate its anagrams, must nevertheless be kept robust and toned. As Schnier points out: "A clown, whose main effect is his immobile face, must keep his face very mobile" (138). The mask of a clown is a façade; its repertoire of variation derives from a cooperative blend of attitude and musculature. To this end, when in private, Schnier regularly projects expressions towards his mirrored face, in order to "get quite close to myself before I could withdraw from myself again" (138). This withdrawal, which can be affiliated to that of O in Beckett's *Film*, involves abstracting himself from the persona which, despite himself, is tilted towards the world. In a curious, anti-Lacanian trajectory, Schnier seeks, in his daily half-hour looking-glass sessions, precisely to sever himself from the image before him. At length, he succeeds in gazing upon one who is unfamiliar. In doing so, he parrots the attitude of a member of his audience who, contemplating him, would perceive him in clownish mode, familiar yet alien. The cost, given his lack of narcissism, he owns, is a state "close to going mad." When his girlfriend was with him, she could rescue him from this self-alienation by reflecting him back to himself. Now, in her absence, he confesses, "there was no one there to bring me back out of the mirror" (139).

In interrogating whether he is soul or spectacle, creature or designer, perhaps Schnier is echoing the questions implicit in Beckett's response to the paintings of Henri Hayden: "Elle n'est pas au bout de ses beaux jours, la crise sujet-objet. Mais c'est à part et au profit l'un de l'autre que nous avons l'habitude de les voir défaillir, ce clown et son gugusse. Alors qu'ici, confondus dans une même inconsistence, ils se désistent de concert" (The subject-object crisis has not reached the end of its heyday. But it is to the separate benefit of each that we customarily see them falter, this clown and his fall guy. Whereas here, blended into the same irresolution, they cooperate in standing back; 1983, 146).[2] "Here" is an artistic space in which the impersonal – (the "de-faced," as Schnier might regard it, or the *devenir-imperceptible*, as Deleuze might regard it) – holds sway over the referenced or the presaged. Hayden's canvases operate for Beckett what the estranged mirror-image operates for Schnier: "Tout est reconnaissable, mais à s'y méconnaître" (It's all recognisable, but it all throws you; 1983, 147). As Beckett points out, this by-passing of opposable subject and object requires courage, but

may also result in "un humour à peine perceptible, à peine triste" (a marginally perceptible, marginally sorrowful humour; 1983, 147).

Those margins in which the familiar goes in league with the alien are the ones commonly inhabited by the clown. As Böll's Schnier observes: "I don't believe there is anyone in the world who understands a clown, even one clown doesn't understand another" (90). Although clowns may borrow from generic types (Pierrot, Auguste, white-face, hobo, etc.), each clown must develop a particularity of an extreme kind, a special persona, a special walk, a special talk. As the theatre teacher Jacques Lecoq asserts:[3] "While the neutral mask is all-inclusive, a common denominator which can be shared by all, the clown brings out the individual in his singularity. He gives the lie to everybody's claim to be better than the next person" (158-59). In his vocational specificity, the clown is not only different from other clowns; he is also utterly distinct from other forms of performance art to which others might attempt to affiliate him. Schnier reports having told his father, when the latter interrogated him as to his intended choice of career, that he wished to become a clown. When his father corrects him with "You mean an actor – very well, perhaps I can send you to drama school," the adolescent retorts: "No, […] not an actor but a clown – and schools are no use to me" (33). Even when exercising his profession as a clown, he continues to need to correct misapprehensions about his calling. When an acquaintance telephones, apologising in case he has interrupted a double somersault, Schnier exasperatedly retorts: "I am not an acrobat, […] I am a clown – there is a difference, at least as much difference as between Jesuits and Dominicans" (119).

The tightrope of self-definition which the clown must tread involves being aware of other practitioners and yet avoiding contamination by them. He may feel drawn towards other creative individuals, but the influence risks being pernicious if insisted upon or unduly theorised. Böll's Schnier is passionately interested in the theatre of Beckett: "Of course I would get into a taxi at once if I had a free evening and heard Beckett was being played somewhere" (90). What he shrinks from is becoming drawn into pretentious discussion about him, as when, at a social gathering, having been "stupid enough to acknowledge having read Beckett," he has to listen to a self-important individual who "talked for almost three quarters of an hour about Beckett and Ionesco, rattling off a lot of stuff which I could tell he had pieced together from his reading" (81). Schnier's admiration of Beckett is a private response, a glancing but committed act of recognition. As such, it

may be compared with Beckett's response to the painting of Jack Yeats, a response which eschews commentary and is content with an act of wonder: "Gloss? In images of such breathless immediacy as these there is no occasion, no time given, no room left, for the lenitive of comment" (1983, 149).

The clown is always, in fact, absorbed in the "breathless immediacy" of the present moment. As Lecoq points out: "It is impossible to list themes for clowns: the whole of life is a clown theme, if you are a clown" (155). One might compare in this context the observation of Kierkegaard that "the comic is present everywhere, and every existence can at once be defined and assigned to its particular sphere by knowing how it is related to the comic." Further, insofar as the comic for Kierkegaard is always to be found in contradiction, and contradiction, adversity and unpredictability are the stuff of everyday life, "the more competently a person exists, the more he will discover the comic" (462). Discovering the comic, for a clown, also entails *un*covering the comic, taking off its wraps and making it visible, audible, tangible. Notably, recalling the early stages of his career, Böll's Schnier remarks: "I even read Kierkegaard (useful reading for an aspiring clown), it was difficult, but not exhausting" (11).

To see the comic as omnipresent (or potentially so) is both exhilarating and debilitating for a clown. Schnier reflects at length about the difficulty for a clown of delineating work and leisure. He cannot exit joyfully from the office or factory; the only way in which he can portray leisure is through the medium of his act. When he has the impression of enjoying some fleeting relaxation, people bring up the topic of art and artists as if it were a diversion rather than the fabric of his existence: "Artistic people always start talking about art at the very moment when the artist happens to feel he is enjoying something like time off. […] When the artist forgets art an artistic person starts talking about Van Gogh, Kafka, Chaplin, or Beckett. At such moments I would like to commit suicide" (92-93).

Schnier's revulsion – in part at least, a Beckettian disaffection with commentary – here stems from what he sees as an assault on an illusion he has temporarily entertained "of being quite normal" (93). Obsession with the springs of his own creativity is both prevalent and intensely private, not something to be recruited in public in idle conversation. What comes across very powerfully in Böll's narrative is the particular and profound otherness of clowns, the paradoxical ways in which, while being intensely attuned to the moment, they are always in

some sense at variance with it. In computer-speak, the clown must enable the pop-ups. A clown has to learn how to excavate the feints and suppressions, the forbidden gestures, which humans commonly apply to their own behaviour in an attempt to disguise what others might construe as weaknesses. For Simon Critchley, some of the most joyful humour in Beckett "arises out of a palpable sense of inability, impotence and inauthenticity" (106).

This valorising of weakness is pre-eminently the province of the clown. Indeed, for Lecoq, the key to a successful clown is precisely the "discovery of how personal weakness can be transformed into dramatic strength." In the ring, or on stage, there can be no precedent script for a clown; the performance cannot be "telephoned." Rather, "the clown, who is ultra-sensitive to others, reacts to everything that happens to him" (154, 155). Several decades after his first appearance on stage, Grock wrote: "No sooner do I get upon the stage than all my self-protective armour peels away from me and I am a recording instrument as sensitive as a mimosa plant. There is nothing I cannot feel and nothing I do not react to" (40). This professional vulnerability is costly and fatiguing. It is impossible for a clown to maintain this receptivity during offstage moments, however much his interlocutors might expect it. As Schnier explains: "What a clown needs is quiet, the simulating of what other people call leisure" (92). It is in those moments of quiet and reflectiveness that sadness – the well-known other face of clowning – can infiltrate. The tears of a clown are an aberration, a seeming contradiction to his habitual persona. Arising from within, they give the lie to the impression that he is all surface. Accustomed to projecting himself as such, the clown may even be taken by surprise by his own lachrymosity.

The narrator of Beckett's *The Unnamable*, resident in his jar outside the restaurant, participates in a spectacle which, like most clownish acts, affirms the equilibrium of the customers. With his receptacle gaily festooned with coloured lanterns and displaying the menu, the public have only to look at him a second time "to have their minds made easy" (301). It is only in private, when the tarpaulin is cast over him, that tears are released: "It was under its shelter, snug and dry, that I became acquainted with the boon of tears, while wondering to what I was indebted for it, not feeling moved" (301). Böll's Schnier also welcomes private oblivion, that of sleep, or of lying in the bathtub, which "is almost as good as sleeping" (99). Yet it is also within this cocoon that, like the Unnamable, he experiences the oddness of involuntary tears: "I

suddenly realized I had begun to cry in the bathtub, and I made a surprising physical discovery: my tears felt cold" (112).

Just as a clown must traverse a troubling interface between public gaiety and private dejection, he must also, while in public, tread a tightrope between empathy and antipathy, familiarity and strangeness. On the face of it, clowns live and embody their unproblematic humanity. Their bodily envelope is unmistakably there; it kicks, lurches, poses and provokes. Clowns have recognisable human needs which they pursue with variable degrees of success. At the same time, they swagger past the boundaries of expected behaviour, thus allowing the audience the luxury both of identification and insulation. Clowns, as Maik Schlüter puts it, "have to be representatives for the *implicit* emotional life of the audience, something the audience never lives" (13, emphasis added). This dialectic of recognition and alienation, in which the clown's humanity remains provisional or negotiable, is aptly described by Thomas Mann, with whose work Beckett became familiar in his twenties. In *The Confessions of Felix Krull*, the narrator visits the Stoudebecker Circus. Observing the antics of the clowns, "those basically alien beings," the narrator ponders: "Are they […] human beings, men that could conceivably find a place in every-day daily life?" He concludes: "I say no, they are not, they are exceptions, side-splitting monsters of preposterousness, glittering, world-renouncing monks of unreason, cavorting hybrids, part human and part insane art" (203, 204).

Lucky's performance in *Waiting for Godot*, under the whip of ringmaster Pozzo, comes close to this model of the circus. Vladimir and Estragon gaze curiously at Lucky as if he were indeed a "cavorting hybrid," a creature going through the motions of human activity and yet securely and incontrovertibly other. His physical and oral gyrations are staged, according to Pozzo, for the benefit of "these honest fellows who are having such a dull, dull time" (39). Yet the benefits turn out in the end to be debilitations, for both performer and watchers. At the circus, as Mann describes, "the savage charm of dangerous deeds performed for the pleasure of the blood-thirsty crowd cater[s] to every taste" (202). Lucky executes his entertainment routine under more duress than would be apparent in the circus ring, but a comparable element of risk and improvisation is present. For him, there is The Net (the title he appends to his lugubrious dance resembling the threshing of a creature caught in a net), but there is no safety net. His performance duly careers out of bounds, and has to be aborted by the squashing of his headgear,

preventing him from further talking through his hat. The remedy is comedic, but the context has passed beyond comedy into that of violent censorship.

For Mann's narrator, then, clowns partake in an array of otherness. They are only partially human; they are "exceptions" to the ordinary; their zany behaviour, running at variance with conventional behaviour, constitutes their "insane art"; moreover, their residence in a mode of life set apart from other mortals renders them akin to cenobites, "monks of unreason." On one level, it might seem incongruous to associate clowns with monks. Whereas the latter have opted to privilege the spiritual, are not the former often seen to exist in a realm of worldly, material transactions (buckets of water, bananas, pratfalls, trousers dropping down, etc.)? Yet, despite a veneer of what may appear to be frolicsome incontinence, the life of a clown, like that of a monk, cannot proceed without a capacity for bodily discipline. The monkhood of a clown is aligned to a vocation which does not abstract them from the world – they are dependent upon the crowd who watch them – but which assigns them nevertheless to a para-life, a life whose emphases have diverged from those of 'ordinary' life.

Hence, when Mann's narrator uses the term "monks of unreason," he suggests that clowns and monks both inhabit a space of irrationality or insanity. Although, as Adam Phillips points out in his study, *Going Sane*, there is something imponderable and elusive about the notion of sanity, madness can appear colourfully creative; it "tends to the theatrical" (18). Both clowns and monks have chosen an itinerary that might be deemed deviant, which differs from the norm in its rhythm and motivating force. In this connection, Kierkegaard draws attention to the way in which a medieval monastic postulant could expect to be seen as embracing holiness. For his own contemporaries, however, a person "would be regarded as lunatic if he entered a monastery." This he sees as a tremendous bonus, since "it protects the quiet inwardness of an absolute relationship," without the distraction of having to correspond to an externally-mandated reputation (Kierkegaard, 416).

The goal of "quiet inwardness" is easy to understand in the context of a monk. It is also observable in many of Beckett's narrators who consider their options from postures of withdrawal and reflection, as with Molloy: "For there seem to be ways of behaving in the presence of wishes, the active and the contemplative, and though they both give the same result it was the latter I preferred, matter of temperament I presume" (49). Contemplation must also, however, be the starting-point of

a clown. Clowns live on the margins, observing the world, finding ways to mirror it in unexpected ways from deep within themselves. A richly comic, alternative vision may be the fruit of a clown's cloister. This is certainly the case with Böll's Schnier, who renounces human 'portrayal' in order to subject human behaviour to the insane perspective which it already contains: "What I do best are the absurdities of daily life: I observe, add up these observations, increase them to the nth degree and draw the square root from them, but with a different factor from the one I increased them by" (95).

This essay has attempted to examine how clowns must inhabit the present moment in a peculiarly intense way while at the same time steering a pathway between an array of apparent contraries (public and private; alien and familiar; silent and vociferous; contemplative and active). In doing so, it has interacted with one of the most insightful fictional anatomies of clowning, Böll's *The Clown*. The ontological and performative features of the clown that I have drawn on are those which enabled correspondences to be drawn with Beckett's clowns. The latter are not happy specialists of slapstick and merrymaking. This is in any case only one optional clown path. It is the darker, more disturbing aspects of the clownish event which recommend themselves here. Within these must be spotlighted the dialectic of tension between the vigour of performance and the reflective and/or depressive environs of prelude and postlude.

These processes operate in a climate of risk. As Lecoq explains, preparing to be a clown is a potentially dangerous business for apprentices, "since it is the dramatic territory which brings them into closest contact with their own selves," and should only be undertaken "when you have built up an experience of life" (159). The contemplative path requires a casting adrift, a relinquishment of securities, and a suspension of control. Böll's Schnier likens it to a kind of dark night of the soul, an experience of void such as might be undergone by a mystic. Describing the passage from the tightly-wound precision of his act to an experience of resourcelessness, he reveals that "it was terrible [...] when the thread broke and I fell back on myself. I imagine monks go through a similar experience when they are in a state of contemplation" (3). One who has entered deeply, from within, into the clowning experience will, according to Lecoq, always be marked by it: "The students will at last have experienced the fundamental reality of creation: solitude" (163). Perhaps, then, whether a clown is a solo practitioner or part of a company, it is in a landscape of isolation that the prerequisite

for the clowning phenomenon – and for its terms of engagement with Beckett's work – may most meaningfully be understood, as summed up in the concluding words of Beckett's *Company*: "And you as you always were. Alone."

Notes

1.   The word 'interview' should, however, be used here with caution, bearing in mind Mel Gussow's report of a conversation he had the following year with Beckett: "Beckett was angry about it. He said it had been done through false pretences. Mitgang had seen him 'for personal reasons' and not for an interview" (Gussow, 41).

2.   I am grateful to Bruno Clément for reminding me of this apposite passage.

3.   Thanks to Steven Barfield for pointing me to this source.

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FROM DADA TO DIDI:
Beckett and the Art of His Century

Enoch Brater

This discussion aims to look at Beckett as both a primary inheritor and innovator of the art of his own century. Beginning with Beckett's formative years in the Paris of the 1930s, this project takes a step back from one-to-one correspondences in order to localize the many ways in which an exciting cultural and historical matrix gives rise to a compatibility of aesthetic concerns. Beckett makes art new, but his art is also constructed as new, nourished and reinvented again and again, by the ongoing resonances it uncovers in the artistic exploration so characteristic of his own moment in history.

In *Lessness*, a short and enigmatic prose piece originally published on one page of *The New Statesman* on May 1, 1970, Beckett abandoned his rigorous and unusually fastidious method of composition. In marked contrast to the deliberate procedures he followed in nearly all of his mature work, where a term like 'overdetermined' can seem like an understatement, this time he went slumming: he wrote 60 sentences on separate pieces of paper, threw them into a box, then took them out one at a time. *Lessness* displays them in the order in which they emerged. The author repeated the process a second time, letting chance have its persuasive say; each sentence appears only twice, but in each case in a different sequence. Written initially as French *Sans* before Beckett completed his own translation into strange and "awful English" (1995a, 164), the piece has an even more fundamental French patrimony:

> Take a newspaper.
> Take a pair of scissors.
> Choose an article as long as you are planning to make your poem.
> Cut out the article.
> Then cut out each of the words that make up this article and put them in a bag.
> Shake it gently.

Then take out the scraps one after another in the order in which
they left the bag.
Copy conscientiously.
The poem will be like you.
And here you are a writer,
     infinitely original and endowed
     with a sensibility that is
     charming though beyond the understanding of the
     vulgar.

(qtd. in Motherwell, 92)

Tristan Tzara's famous manifesto on "How to Make a Dadaist Poem"
was, however, full of marvelous inconsistencies. It's hard to believe,
for example, that the artist Hans Arp, who adapted this technique for
his own purposes, wouldn't have been tempted to upset such accidental
arrangements when he tore paper into squares of various sizes, then
dropped them onto a sheet of paper and pasted them into place where
they fell. He did the same with his abstract wood reliefs, generating
forms from automatic drawings which he then had a carpenter cut into
shapes. Did he ever shift them a bit, or choose some pieces of paper
rather than others, because they looked better that way? Such question-
able 'readymades' are perhaps even more likely to become ready-
mades-assisted when we return to what Kurt Schwitters called "the
elements of poetry," "letters, syllables, words" and "sentences" (215).
Here, too Beckett plays his hand – and, sophisticated writer that he is,
he plays it well. The final sentence of *Lessness* is poised as follows:
"Figment dawn dispeller of figments and the other called dusk." While
it is not mathematically impossible for such lexical and phonetic ele-
ments to cohere – every hand dealt in a game of cards is, of course,
equally improbable – in the case of *Lessness* sentence 120 concludes on
the hard sound of 'k' and "dusk" is, well, dusk (see Brienza, 179-96).

   Lessness is full of other Dada headaches. As Beckett told Martin
Esslin when he was preparing a reading of the piece for broadcast on
BBC Radio in February 1971, "It is composed of 6 statement groups
each containing 10 sentences, i.e. 60 sentences in all." Each order is
assigned a different paragraph structure, the whole arranged "in 2 x 12
= 24 paragraphs"; and Beckett further pointed out that each statement
group is "formally differentiated" so that the ten sentences composing it
are "signed" by "certain elements common to all":

Group A – Collapse of refuge – Sign: "true refuge."
Group B – Outer world – Sign: "earth – sky" juxtaposed or apart.
Group C – body exposed – Sign: "little body."
Group D – Refuge forgotten – Sign: "all gone from mind."
Group E – Past and future denied – Sign: "never" – except in the one sentence "figment dawn etc."
Group F – Past and future affirmed – Sign: future tense.[1]

So much for chance; and so much for taking letters, words, syllables and sentences haphazardly out of a hat. This is indeed something more than Stéphane Mallarmé had in mind when he scattered his words across the page in the poem "Un coup de dés" ("A Throw of the Dice") in 1897.

Beckett will be similarly circumspect in his borrowings from other Dada strategies, and no more so than in *Not I*. That play has become so well known among Beckett specialists, and indeed within the international theater community as a whole, that it is perhaps difficult to recapture its initial impact on audiences who saw the premiere performances at Lincoln Center in New York and, a few months later, at the Royal Court Theatre in London. The television adaptation for BBC, featuring a bravura performance by Billie Whitelaw as Mouth, made it, if anything, even more notorious. Here was a play, as the author himself wryly noted about its companion piece, *That Time*, that could only be explained as "something out of Beckett" (qtd. in Gontarski 1980, 112). But perhaps not quite. Tzara's dramatis personae in *The Gas Heart* (1920) include not only Mouth, but Eye, Ear, Nose, Neck and Eyebrow as well, each one, however, scaled larger than life. And another work from the same period, *Humulus the Mute* (1929), a romp in four scenes by Jean Anouilh and Jean Aurenche, makes use of a Mouth-Auditor dualism to structure "a bitterly silly, pointless joke, in the purist Dadaist tradition" (Benedikt and Wellwarth, xxxi). Yet neither work, ambitious as it is, displays the same careful attention to scenographic detail we remember from *Not I*, a design element so essential to Beckett's allure that it becomes almost iconographic in the plays that follow.

Destabilizing, insidious and thrilling, visuals in Beckett are always an important part of the mix. If the first audiences for *Not I* were stymied in their attempt to locate a theatrical precedent for the image advanced here with so much precision and authority, they were far more likely to find this in the unlimited formal and expressive liberties taken by the avant-gardists of the legendary Cabaret Voltaire. Their

subversive Zurich tactics were swiftly taken up by other practitioners in
Berlin, Hanover, Cologne, Paris and eventually New York. Making it
'really' new, and often less concerned to enlighten than to outrage the
public and create a scandal, artists like Max Ernst, Hugo Ball, Marcel
Duchamp, Man Ray, Sophie Tauber, Giorgio de Chirico, and most es-
pecially René Magritte, arranged their materials in a stunning variety of
improbable contexts. Eyes materialize with uncanny regularity, and in
unexpected places. Everywhere one feels the sense of what the French
call, quite accurately, *dépaysement*. Setting perspective askew, vision
itself is called into question. The recent museum survey of Dada, which
originated at the Pompidou Center in Paris before traveling to the Na-
tional Gallery in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Modern Art in
New York, makes this abundantly clear: 450 works by 50 artists high-
lighted both the range and proliferation of styles that are both mutually
supportive and exclusive.[2] "Dada, Dada, Dada," Tzara wrote with con-
siderable brio, was synonymous with "Freedom," embracing as it did "a
roaring of tense colors," an "interlacing of opposites and of all contra-
dictions, grotesques" and "inconsistencies." In a word, Dada was
"LIFE" (qtd. in Motherwell, 81-82).

What saved Dada from oblivion was its sense of the absurd, its
healthy dose of skepticism, and a bag of tricks designed to *épater le
bourgeois*. Beckett shares this sensibility in *Breath*, where his random
detritus anticipates the raw energy of punk graphics, but also in *Quad*,
where the celebration of color, followed by its lack, traces the rhythmic
footsteps of a Dada journey to nowhere 'in particular' – and back again,
"100,000 years later" (qtd. in Brater 1994, 109). Beckett transforms
bruitism, the habit of making noise for no sake other than itself, into his
own "matter of fundamental sounds" – and in this case the "joke" is
very much "intended" (qtd. in Harmon, 24). Uncontrollable flatulence,
a Dada specialty (in 1928 Antonin Artaud was fascinated by this prob-
lem in Roger Vitrac's *Victor: ou les enfants au pouvoir*), is experienced
by more than one Beckett character; Molloy, a journey-man with a
passion for precision, even sets his to numbers. Fortunately, in this case
Beckett spares us the obsessive systematization of confusion involved
in scoring the croaking of three frogs in *Watt*:

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Krak! –    –    –    –    –    –    –
Krek! –    –    –    –   Krek!  –    –
Krik!  –    –   Krik!  –    –   Krik! –

Krak! –    –    –    –    –    –    –
```

–   – Krek! –   –   –   – Krek!
–   Krik! –   – Krik!   –   – Krik!

(137)

I can't – and I won't – go on.

James Knowlson reminds us that the "drame bourgeois" Beckett wrote while still a student at Trinity, *Le Kid*, a parody of Corneille and Charlot (Charlie Chaplin), participates in the same heady rapture of irreverence and iconoclasm; the playwright even remembered writing it in the "by then somewhat jaded" spirit of some of the early experiments of Dada (Knowlson, 128). And as late as the "close of a long day" in *Rockaby* (1981), one of Beckett's most memorable female figures is discovered alone on stage in a rocking chair, still "Fuck[ing around with] life."

Beckett's works can also be referenced, albeit somewhat more obliquely, with certain spectacular moments in the surrealist tradition, Dada's far more accomplished stepchild. Winnie planted in her mound of earth in *Happy Days* is a not altogether obscure allusion to the unwelcome figures similarly buried in the final frames in *Un chien andalou*; and *Molloy*-talk traverses the same terrain when the character's visual attention is momentarily arrested in the novel's early pages by the haunting image of a dead donkey's eye. The close-up which announces Beckett's 22-minute "comic and unreal" *Film* (12) is similarly bound to Buñuel as much as it is to Bishop Berkeley. Even more tantalizing is the fact that the film script appeared in the same special surrealist number of *This Quarter* (September 1932) where Beckett's translations of poems by René Crevel, Paul Éluard and André Breton can be found.

Critics, myself included, have not always been entirely certain about what to do in the face of so many "demented particulars." On the one hand, this has resulted in a dazzling series of studies suggestively linking Beckett to the art of his century ("Beckett and – ," you fill in the blanks); on the other, it sometimes emboldens "dons on overdrive" (see Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*) to construct a complete theory of aesthetics based on such waning literary evidence.[3] "No try no fail." But what led the playwright from Dada to Didi may very well point us in another direction, one that has far more to do with inspiration than influence. Beckett found in Dada, even after it had morphed into surrealism, a climate of spontaneity that offered him a new vocabulary for fracture

and ruptured certainties. What it did not offer him was a structure to meet its own demands; this was a domain Beckett made entirely his own. In a certain sense, in works like *Lessness* and *Not I*, as elsewhere, he took Dada at its own word; and then he took it one step further.

That Beckett was a formalist is hardly what anyone by this date would call big news. Even his first commentators were thrilled to seize upon the early interview in which he held forth – a rarity for him – on the virtues of finding "a form that accommodates the mess" (qtd. in Driver, 23). The Dada adventurists and their rear-guard associates who preceded him on the Left Bank – the movement was on its last legs by the time Beckett arrived in Paris in the late 1920s – may have called for the abolition of "the old style," as well as a much-needed end to 'Salon' art with a capital A, but they were not necessarily successful or even interested in finding a "shape that matters" (qtd. in Schneider, 34). Beckett was. And that would make all the difference.

Both by inclination and training, Beckett was fascinated by artists with a strict sense of decorum: Dante, of course, whose elegant *terza rima* was a model of symmetry and lyrical concision; Joyce, the "synthesizer" (Beckett qtd. in Brater 1986, 5) who sought to incorporate nothing less than the history of Western civilization into the sixteen-year project known as *Finnegans Wake*; and, to a lesser extent, Proust, a writer's writer whose simplest sentence has the painful potential to open up an entire world. Beckett was also well-disciplined in the classics, a part of which always remained sacred to him; as the intrepid Winnie observes, "One loses one's classics. (*Pause.*) Oh not all. (*Pause.*). A part. (*Pause.*) A part remains. (*Pause.*) That is what I find so wonderful, a part remains, of one's classics, to help one through the day. (*Pause.*) Oh yes, many mercies, many mercies" (1961, 57-58). In the visual arts, too, Beckett was drawn to the precision of a Caravaggio, with his seamless control over light on canvas when less did not seem possible; and in music his taste ran to the evocative power in the structured measures of the late Schubert and Beethoven, not to the eccentricities and rodomontades of the mostly Mozart variety. Opera was strictly out of the question.[4]

My brief discussion here hinges on one final issue, and one that goes to the heart of the matter concerning Beckett and the art of his century. Like any major figure, Beckett is both representative of his moment in time and someone who stands apart from it. That is what brings additional resonance to the concept of a truly "borderless Beckett." I have focused on Dada, but I might just as well have cen-

tered my discussion on any number of groundbreaking movements in twentieth-century European art. In Beckett's work we can sense any 'and' all of these powerful forces at play, though not one of them on its own can fully certify his achievement or explain it "all strange away." Despite reports to the contrary (rather dated now), this very particular author is no deader than any of his texts; and despite our attempts to track these down through the multiple associations and cross-references they give rise to, they constantly elude us: "what tenderness in these little words, what savagery." That is what keeps us going, "call that going, call that on," fellow travelers all. The same might be said (and in fact has been said) of artists from other periods, Michelangelo certainly, but Shakespeare and Titian as well. In my generation it has become neither fashionable nor politically correct to make such claims, though you never know – "nothing is certain when you're about"; perhaps "the times, they are a-changin'." It's surely no longer possible to use with any credibility a phrase that begins with "Writers like Beckett… ." In the twentieth century there simply aren't any. For in his "case nought" the forms are "many" indeed, *mirabile dictu*, "in which the unchanging seeks release from its form[*lessness*]."[5]

Notes

1.   See Esslin (117-20); and Brater (1986, 90-99).

2.   See Dickerman; and Simic (10-13).

3.   For a careful examination of such "demented particulars," see Ackerley. For studies of Beckett in relation to other artists, see Oppenheim (1999, 2000) and Bryden. Daniel Albright (2003) tries to make the case that surrealism is central to any understanding of Beckett's work. His *Representation and the Imagination* (1981) is far more successful in positioning Beckett in relation to his time.

4.   See, for example, Knowlson (504, 520-22, 533, 601-02).

5.   The quotations in the last four paragraphs are from the following works: "No try no fail" from *Worstward Ho* (17); "the old style" is one of Winnie's refrains in *Happy Days*; "all strange away" alludes to the 1963-64 Beckett text in Gontarski (1995, 169-81); "what tenderness in these little words, what savagery" from *Molloy* (112); "call that going, call that on," from *The Unnamable* (3); "nothing is certain when you're about" from *Godot* (10a); "the times, they

are a-changin'" quotes the 1964 Bob Dylan song; "case nought" from *...but the clouds...* (261); "The forms are many in which the unchanging seeks relief from its form[*lessness*]," in *Malone Dies* (21; emphasis added).

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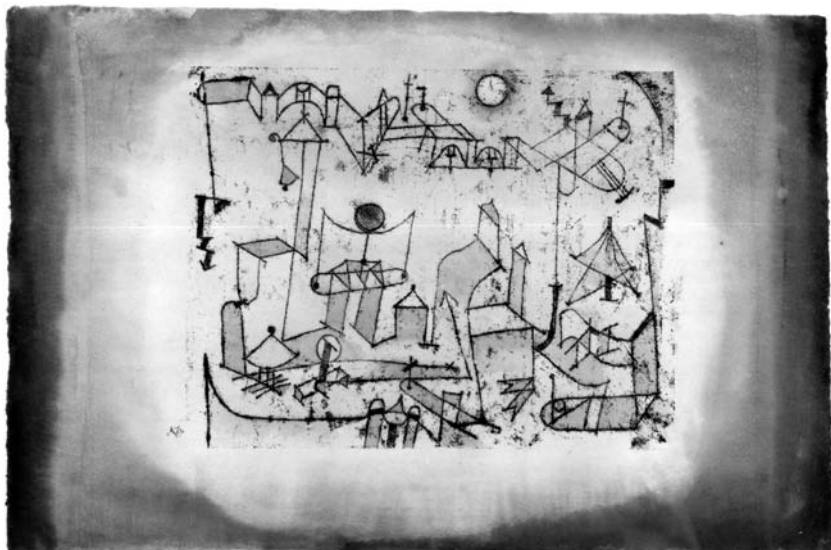
Fig. 1 Paul Klee, *City in the Intermediate Realm*, 1921, oil transfer and watercolor, Columbus Museum of Art, Ohio, Sirak Collection
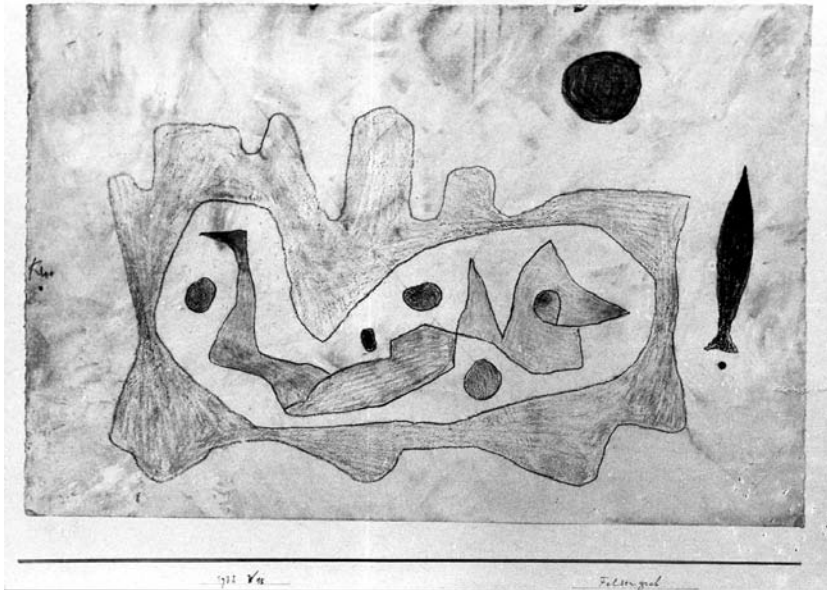
Fig. 2 Paul Klee, *Rock Grave*, 1932, colored inks and crayon, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
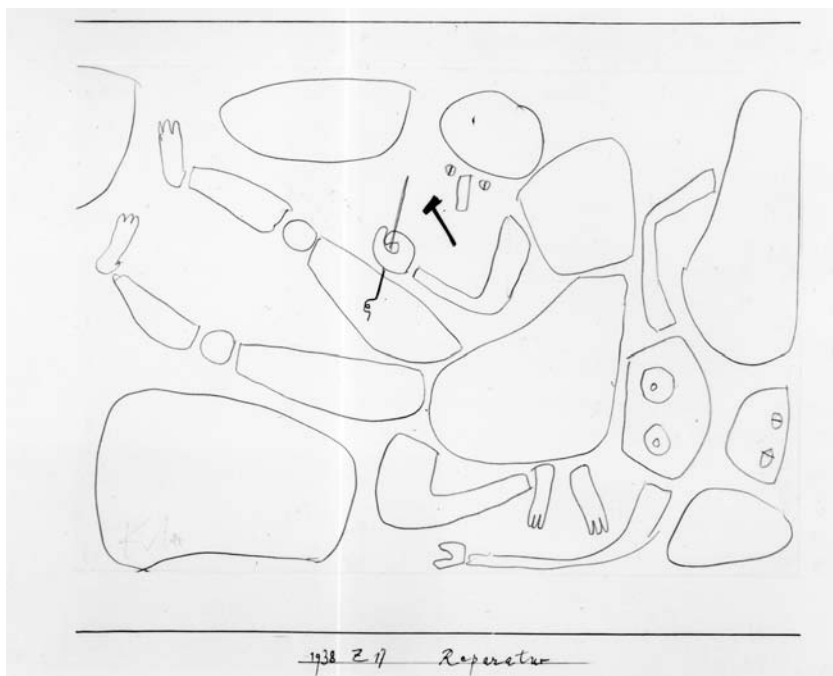
Fig. 3 Paul Klee, *Repair*, 1938, pencil, Zentrum Paul Klee, Bern
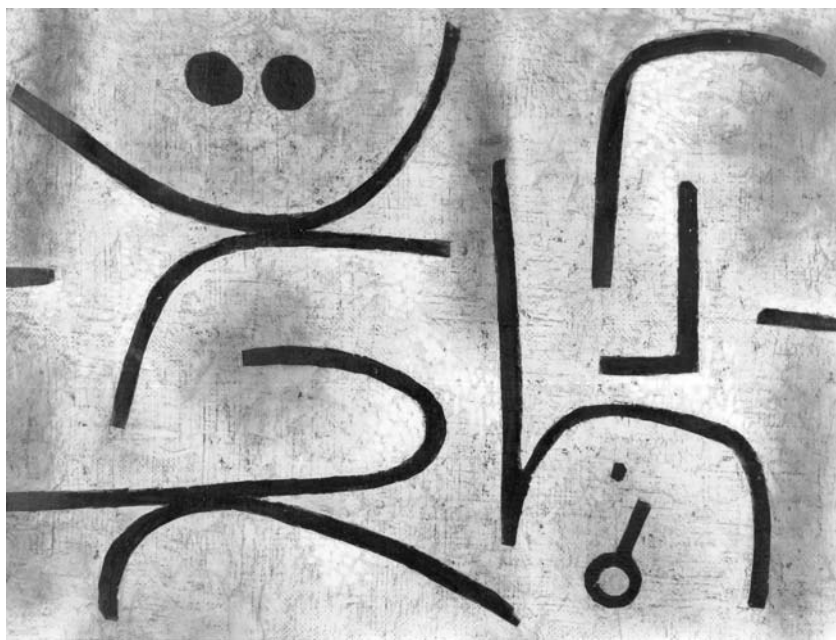
Fig. 4 Paul Klee, *Broken Key*, 1938, oil on burlap, Sprengel Museum, Hanover

GENESIS, CHILD'S PLAY,
AND THE GAZE OF SILENCE:
Samuel Beckett and Paul Klee

Angela Moorjani

Samuel Beckett situated Paul Klee among "the great of [his] time." I explore the reasons for Beckett's recognition of an artist whose distillations suggest that he is to painting what Beckett is to the written word and stage. Beckett and Klee were among the modernist writers and artists who were fascinated with genesis and child's play in opting for a willed impoverishment of unseeing and unknowing. I will investigate this shared trajectory by drawing in particular on the work of Rudolf Arnheim on visual perception and the nonrepresentational translations children make of an intersecting inner and outer world.

At the 2006 *Klee and America* exhibition at the Phillips Collection in Washington, D. C., as I was peering intently at Paul Klee's *City in the Intermediate Realm* (figure 1), a man came up to me and asked, "What do you see?" Startled out of my reverie, I mumbled, "still looking." Only later did I think of what I wish I had said, "One looks at Klee not to see," or of quoting one of Klee's aphorisms, "Art does not reproduce the visible, but makes visible" (1976, 118). And this painting was beginning to make something visible in that other intermediate realm between it and the viewer, even if it was only that there is no realistic semblance to identify, only scribbled shapes and colors and rhythms to follow with your eyes without seeing something other than that distillation. "One must accept the radical impotency of the gaze" is how Peggy Phelan puts this interaction between seer and seen (18).

Why should we look not to see? Let me try to explain by way of Beckett's 1945 essay on the van Velde brothers, "La peinture des van Velde ou le monde et le pantalon." Beckett describes a newly painted canvas as being simply there, its only life consisting of colors and lines. When the eyes of a viewer humanize these painterly signs, he argues, the painting 'is done in' as a painting: "Il finira par en crever" (119). But, at the same time, without the beholder's gaze, the painting does

not exist. Looked at, the painting is misread; not looked at, it is non-existent, a familiar Beckettian predicament. I suggest that to let a painting be, the gaze must resist its one-sided power to make it visible. It is a matter of letting the painting look at you as much as your looking at it, thereby respecting its transitional status of neither 'me' nor 'not me' in that intermediate playground that D. W. Winnicott posits for all cultural activity. "Now it looks at me," Klee would say of a finished painting (qtd. in Grohmann, 9), and what is needed is perhaps what Klee called a *Gaze of Silence*, his title for one of his 1932 paintings (reprod. in Helfenstein and Turner, 201).

Such a blank gaze involves some rather drastic unloading of cultural baggage. In a 1945 review of a book by Thomas MacGreevy on Jack B. Yeats, Beckett writes, "There is at least this to be said for mind, that it can dispel mind. And at least this for art-criticism, that it can lift from the eyes, before *rigor vitae* sets in, some of the weight of congenital prejudice" (1984b, 95). Looking not to see, then, is intertwined with what Beckett so aptly describes as "lifting from the eyes" the load of habitual ways of looking that we acquire from our environment without being aware of the weight of this habitus. In the case of artists and writers, we call it tradition and influence and trace their paths of resistance to them. For Beckett, lifting some of the weight of a superb literature of the word was to 'unword' in a language that put him in the position of a learner. Klee similarly turned away from his formidable academic training in the direction of the unschooled artist and child. In distancing themselves in their middle years from tradition and professional expertise, both writer and artist likened painterly or writerly activity to child's play: "Now it is a game, I am going to play," announces Malone in *Malone Dies* (180), as he is about to launch into another fiction, and Hamm in *Endgame*, as he labors at his story, intones: "Then babble, babble, words, like the solitary child who turns himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark" (70).

In the same review of MacGreevy's book, the then 39-year-old Beckett situates Jack B. Yeats among "the great of [his] time" in the company of a number of European painters, listing the Russian-born Wassily Kandinsky and the Swiss-born Paul Klee first, both associated with the Blue Rider and the Bauhaus, followed by the Swiss expressionist Karl Ballmer, the Dutch Bram van Velde, and the two French artists Georges Rouault and Georges Braque. Beckett's definition of artistic greatness may provide some insight into the idiosyncrasy of his 1945 list: "[Yeats] is with the great of our time [...] because he brings

light, as only the great dare to bring light, to the issueless predicament of existence, reduces the dark where there might have been, mathematically at least, a door" (1984b, 97). How Beckettian to speak in the same sentence of an "issueless predicament" and of the odds of a way out via a door. Klee, too, imagined ghostly doors, as the title of a 1925 painting indicates – *Ghost Chamber with High Door* – in which the closed door appears more like a walled-up window without visible means of opening it (reprod. in Helfenstein and Turner, 97).

In designating him among "the great of [his] time," Beckett would appear to have recognized in Klee an artist whose distillations suggest that he is to painting what Beckett was to become to the written word and stage. By 1945, when he made the judgment of Klee's greatness, Beckett would have seen quite a bit of the artist's work, beginning with the Klees reproduced in *transition* at the time Eugene Jolas's literary magazine published installments of Joyce's *Work in Progress* and some of Beckett's early short fiction and poetry. Klee, who was born in Switzerland some 27 years before Beckett's birth, spent most of his artistic life in Germany, exhibiting with the Blue Rider group in 1912 and teaching at the Bauhaus and Düsseldorf Academy until the Nazis dismissed him in 1933. By the 1920s he had become one of the stars of the European avant-garde, so that Beckett made a special point of viewing Klee's paintings during his German museum tour, along with those of other modernist artists the Nazi regime condemned as unhealthy and was purging from public collections, among which 102 works by Klee. Shortly after Beckett returned to Ireland in 1937, the infamous *Degenerate Art* exhibition in Munich held modernist art up to ridicule, including seventeen works by Klee described in terms of confusion and insanity (Werckmeister, 54). The power of Klee's works to entrance and disturb so greatly – not unlike Beckett's – has to do partly with the ways they undermine the power of the gaze by an instability that keeps viewers and readers from settling into fixed positions of seeing. You look and you look and you can't answer that question "What do you see?" in the conventional manner.

Klee's and Beckett's countermovement to the will to know and to see led to their fascination with genesis and the first glimmerings of art in childhood. They both adopted the trope of timelessness in the mind, the "darkened mind gone wombtomb" in the words of Beckett's Belacqua (1992, 45). In the same year Beckett wrote his first Belacqua fiction, Klee painted his *Rock Grave* of 1932 (figure 2), in which an embryonic form reclines in a womblike entombment. Klee, who was not

only a painter, but also a musician and poet, wrote in 1920, "I cannot be grasped in the here and now. For I reside just as much with the dead as with the unborn. Somewhat closer to the heart of creation than usual. But not nearly close enough" (1996, 7; my translation). Since Klee composed this credo, which was fittingly to become his epitaph, for an exhibition catalogue, it is not unlikely that Beckett could have known of it. It was certainly among Klee's most frequently quoted words at the time. The later speaker of Beckett's *Texts for Nothing* similarly declares, "here are my tomb and mother [...] I'm dead and getting born" (137-38).

On the other hand, Beckett and Klee's references to a timelessness before birth and after death may be a matter of shared sources. As I have written elsewhere, this abstract location of generativity, which they shared with many modernists, is derived from a long line of religious, mystical, and philosophic sources: it was renewed for the romantics and modernists by Schelling and Schopenhauer via Buddhist and Hindu sources, and for the postmodernists by Julia Kristeva and Jacques Derrida's musing on the Platonic chora (Moorjani 1997, 212-14). Rudolf Arnheim has an insightful gloss on this fascination by artists during the first half of the twentieth century. For him, it is their outsider status that turned them into detached observers interested in "fundamental qualities" and the "pure form [that] aims more directly at the hidden clockwork of nature" (1974, 147).

From their rock graves and other enwombments Beckett and Klee's figures are waiting ghostlike always on the threshold of a departure with which they identify their artistic making and writing: "There's going to be a departure, I'll be there, I won't miss it, it won't be me, I'll be here, I'll say I'm far from here, it won't be me" is the speaker of Beckett's *Text* 3 putting his aborted departures into utterance (1995, 109). Klee describes genesis in terms of something "indefinite and vague" emerging out of chaos, neither here nor there, neither now nor then, a "*Schattenwerden*" (a phantom becoming), with a faint stirring signaling the coming into being from a primordial state (qtd. in Osterwold, 116; my translation). Klee's images of bizarre angelic creatures similarly show them hovering between this and the other world, such as his *Poor Angel* of 1939, still evolving, more ghost than angel, and not to be seized hold of once and for all by our gaze (reprod. in Osterwold, 426). Belacqua describes this intermediate realm as "a gloom of ghostly comfort" (1992, 45), and it is perhaps the influence of Klee's many angels (among others favored by German artists and poets of the times)

that account for Beckett's mysterious angelic apparitions, for instance, in *Godot* and *Molloy*.

Beyond their fascination for genesis and closely related to it, modernists sought to recapture the child's 'innocent eye,' that too, no doubt, a romantic legacy originating in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's respect for the child unspoiled by conventional ways. John Ruskin put it as follows in *The Elements of Drawing* of 1857: "The whole technical power of painting depends on our recovery of what may be called the innocence of the eye; that is to say, of a sort of childish perception of [...] flat stains of colour, merely as such, without consciousness of what they signify, – as a blind man would see them if suddenly gifted by sight" (qtd. in Fineberg, 9). And Baudelaire's words in his 1867 essay "The Painter of Modern Life," to the effect that artistic genius involves molding a regained childlike sensibility into artistic form, was frequently quoted at the beginning of the twentieth century (Fineberg, 5). But it is particularly the amazing perceptual psychologist Rudolf Arnheim who explains the reasons for the modernists' esteem of child art. Arnheim, who celebrated his 102nd birthday the year of Beckett's centenary, not only belongs to Beckett's generation, but we know that his first book, *Film as Art* (1932), with its avant-garde claim that form derives from media, influenced Beckett's view of film and other media (see Engelberts; Tanaka). To this influential film and art theorist, it is clear that modern art begins with a break from the long western tradition yoking art to the imitation of nature (Arnheim 1986, 50-51), and he reminds us that Cézanne and the fauvists were rejected on the grounds that they were considered incapable of such imitation. J. K. Huysmans, in fact, called Paul Cézanne "un artiste aux rétines malades" (an artist with diseased retinas) (qtd. in 1986, 51; my translation). Arnheim, however, asserts that it is the very function of perception to discover shapes and structures in nature and to adapt them to the artistic medium, such as the two-dimensional surface of screen or canvas. Form and its power to affect us are primarily derived from the medium of expression and not from the object (1974, 139). His influence here on Beckett was lasting.

In privileging both childlike sensitivity and the adaptation of form to medium in the place of realistic semblance, modernists were particularly attracted, on the one hand, to nonwestern art, such as Japanese Ukiyo-e prints that excel at handling flat space, and, on the other hand, they were drawn to two-dimensional and nonfigurative child art. Children's first scribbles, Arnheim maintains, do not represent objects they

see, but express the child's mood and temperament as filtered through their motor activity (1974, 171-72). These first stirrings of art go beyond bodily gesturing by the traces made on paper that turn the scribbler's pleasures and pains into signs for others to look at without seeing more than that. This gestural expression, as compared to representation, entranced Klee and such later artists as Jackson Pollock and Cy Twombly. From his notebooks and drawings it is clear that Klee saw the origins of calligraphy and drawing in children's first signs on paper (see 1964, 103, and his 1932 drawing *Signs Intensifying Themselves*, reprod. in Lanchner, 259).

Similarly, Henri Matisse explains the beginning of fauvism, whose centenary was celebrated in 1905, in terms of the emotional foundation of artistic expression: "In observing nature," he writes, "we were like children, letting our temperament speak […]. I painted what I felt, using color" (qtd. in Matamoros and Szymusiak, 1; my translation). Beckett, too, is known to insist on the emotional underpinnings of his art, declaring "je ne suis que sensibilité" (I am all sensibility) (qtd. in d'Aubarède 7) and referring to the elements of his art as "fundamental sounds," punningly or not (Beckett 1998, 24.) As he told Maurice Nadeau in 1951, what interests him is not the mastery of language, but "the scream, the howl, the gurgling in the throat" that are also forms of language, and "a mouth, only a talking mouth, uttering words without sense" (qtd. in Nadeau 365; my translation). By 1951, Beckett had written *The Unnamable*, where he tried to put this emotional program into effect, a program he was to revive in the theatre in the following two decades. To quote *The Unnamable*: "It will be the same silence, the same as ever, murmurous with muted lamentation, panting and exhaling of impossible sorrow, like distant laughter, and brief spells of hush" (393), and a bit further on: "that's how it will end, in heart-rending cries, inarticulate murmurs to be [...] improvised, as I groan along, [...] nyum, hoo, plop, psss, nothing but emotion" (408). Beckett's obsessive evocations of screaming and talking mouths bring to mind Klee's 1939 painting *Double Screamer*, in which a child's wide-open mouth is echoed by an inverted mouth suggesting a scream that has been projected onto a double (reprod. in Osterwold, 353).

Beyond the stage of early emotional signs that Klee and Beckett and the modernists revitalized as artful ways of lifting from the eyes and ears the prejudice of centuries of seeing and knowing, artists were also taken with the forms children invent once they realize that the shapes they make on paper are signs that can stand for objects in the

world. At this stage of child art, a circle stands for all solid and en-closed objects, such as the human body. With such shapes they are still not copying what their eyes see, Arnheim argues, but inventing a form adapted to the conditions of the two-dimensional medium (1974, 175-77). The overextension of the circle to represent figures and things has its equivalent in child language development with one word standing for many unrelated objects besides being a sentence all to itself. For example, children may extend the word 'ball' to all kinds of round ob-jects, including a doorknob and the moon (Yule, 185). In his discussion of Vico's theories of the origins of language in "Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce," Beckett comments, "The child extends the names of the first familiar objects to other strange objects in which he is conscious of some analogy" (25). Is it perhaps this one-form stage that the speaker of Beckett's *Unnamable* is remembering, when, he conceives of himself as a "a big talking ball," explaining, "I always knew I was round, solid and round, without daring to say so, no asperities, no apertures, invisi-ble perhaps" (305-06)? In Klee's 1938 drawing *Childhood*, a circle, still in the process of becoming one, also appears to stand for the body of a child (reprod. in Fineberg, 115).

It is, however, the point at which children divide up such global shapes into iconic and ideographic signs for parts of the body that had particular significance for Klee and other painters. Children either fuse the splintered forms into larger figurations, or they scatter them play-fully over the picture plane (Arnheim 1974, 173, 191-94). As I have written elsewhere, Melanie Klein and Jacques Lacan, learning from her, associate the tendency of children to fracture images, shatter toys, and dismember dolls with aggressiveness and fears of disintegration. In their view, artists repeat this early aggressiveness in their projections of bodily splinters into their works (see Moorjani 1992, 7, 45-102). When Beckett writes that the first zone of Murphy's mind, where revenge is the *modus vivendi*, contains "the world of the body broken up into the pieces of a toy" (1957, 112) he has in mind, no doubt, Klein's well-known psychoanalytic play technique and the phantasms of fractured bodies she derived from early aggressiveness.

The body in pieces projected onto page and stage is as evident in Beckett's work as it is in Klee's, with each drawing in their own way on the artful play of the child in their reworking of the motif. For Beckett, there are besides the disintegrating bodies of his fictional pup-pets, the body parts that are projected onto the stage, the heads protrud-ing from urns, the notorious Mouth of *Not I*, the lone head of *That*

Time. In the few years before his death in 1940, as Klee was living in exile, distressed by the renewed outbreak of war and dying of scleroderma, he produced some 1500 drawings in the gestural script of children, many of which depict the bodies of dolls, puppets, and children at play in bits and pieces. Klee's titles suggest the intensity of the grief accompanying these projected images, such as *Outburst of Fear*, *Fleeing Child*, *Battle among Children*, *Fall*, *Fatal Blow*.

In conclusion, I would like to briefly summarize the ways in which Beckett and Klee draw on child's play to safeguard their works from the viewers' annihilating gaze. Both project splits of self into their works in the form of ghostly doubles and puppets, splintered signatures, and the body in pieces, but only to use these as elements in a game of hide and seek, come and go, now you see me, now you don't. Their projected selves, no sooner made visible, become invisible, and back and forth, in a nonending reversal of perspective. Such figure and ground reversals, Wilfred Bion finds, are often used to avoid painful perceptions (see Moorjani 2004, 33-34), but for Arnheim, it is a technique "designed to shock the observer out of [a] complacent trust of reality" by introducing a healthy instability into all seeing (1974, 227). Even as the viewer is bringing the painting from inexistence to existence, the painting is playing hide and seek with the viewer, defending itself from imposed readings by its reversible structures and contradictions. It is a lesson in not seeing once and for all, for as soon as you see it, it is gone.

My favorite Beckettian example of such figure and ground reversals is *Molloy*, into which the author has projected splinters of his writerly self. In the two-part novel (plus preface), the reader is constantly confronted with figure and ground reversals, no less than in a M. C. Escher print, in which what is figure in part one becomes ground in part two, and what is figure in part two, is ground in part one. That is, until in the manner of the child's *fort-da*, all is made to disappear at the end. I have always applied to this novel what Moran said about the dance of his bees: "Here is something I can study all my life, and never understand" (169). With Beckett, as with Klee, we have to be prepared not to understand, not to see, while entranced by the pleasure of the come and go.

In Klee's *Repair* (figure 3), drawn two years before his death, he pictures himself putting back together a puppet in splinters with which he may well be identifying. It is surely not by chance that two Beckettians interested in psychoanalysis have written about this very image:

Lois Oppenheim in her recent book on art and neuro-psychoanalysis, *A Curious Intimacy* (118) and the present writer some years ago in her Kleinian reading of the aesthetic and ethical consequences of melancholy in literature and the arts (1992, 96).

In Klee's painting *Broken Key* (figure 4), of the same year as *Repair*, the artist's self in pieces is related to a number of signs scattered over the picture plane. First, there is a broken key at the lower right, where he often placed his signature: 'Klee,' a French homonym of *clé* (key). In addition to this broken signature, the black lines in the painting can be read as both the lower half of a child's face and as letter fragments of the artist's signature: 'K' and 'L' and parts of 'E' floating over a rhythmically arranged field of colors that keep the eyes moving from foreground to background of black against white, warm hues against cold, and complementary orange against green. Lines and colors recall the child's first expressive play with elementary signs, the later invention of scriptlike signs for the body, and the falling-to-bits phantasm, all adapted to the two-dimensionality of the medium and oscillating between the visibility of pain and in invisibility of pleasure. The way this painting looks at us teaches us about the virtues of the silent gaze.

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ANIMALS, HUMANS, STONES

BECOMING STONE:
A Leibnizian Reading of Beckett's Fiction

Naoya Mori

Samuel Beckett's works suggest that humans are dead like stones and stones are alive like creatures. The ambiguous border between humans and stones reflects Beckett's borderless grasp on life and death, which he envisions as the metamorphosis of human beings into a state of metaphysical stone that is inde-structible and imbued with memories and feelings. Belacqua, Molloy, Malone, and the Unnamable share the vision of such a stone representing life in limbo. Focusing upon the image of stone in Beckett's works, this essay reads the trilogy in particular as an ontological transformation based on Leibnizian vital-ism.

Beyond the Cartesian Dualism

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare expresses the visionary transformation of a drowned man in the sea fancifully: his bones have turned to coral, his eyes to pearls, and he is suspended between life and death.[1] The Ren-aissance imagination that urged Shakespeare to represent the metamor-phosis of a man into minerals in a state of limbo survives, via Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, in the imagination of Samuel Beckett. When Beckett writes in his 1933 letter to Thomas MacGreevy, "Leibniz a great cod, but full of splendid little pictures" (qtd. in Uhlmann, 3),[2] Beckett is probably under the influence of Bertrand Russell, who states in the preface of *The Philosophy of Leibniz*, first published in 1900, that "the *Monadology* was a kind of fantastic fairy tale, coherent perhaps, but wholly arbitrary" (1992, xvii). This paper sheds light on some of the "splendid little pictures" of Beckett's stone and sand that derive from Leibniz's metaphysical images.

Beckett's stone has been interpreted in terms of its biographical, psychological, and mythological references. As to the biographical connection, James Knowlson writes, "He [Beckett] recounted how he used to take stones of which he was particularly fond home with him from the beach in order to protect them from the wearing away of the waves or the vagaries of the weather. He would lay them gently into the

branches of trees in the garden to keep them safe from harm" (29). On Beckett's childhood obsession with stone, Knowlson states, "Later in life, he came to rationalize this concern as the manifestation of an early fascination with the mineral, with things dying and decaying, with pet-rification" (29). Regarding the psychological aspect of Beckett's love of stones, Gottfried Büttner reports: "Beckett mentioned Sigmund Freud, who had once written that man carried with him a kind of con-genital yearning for the mineral kingdom" (163n).[3] A mythological approach leads Julie Campbell to cite the Echo myth from Ovid's *Metamorphoses:* "Only her voice and her bones remain: then, only voice; for they say that her bones turned to stone" (qtd. in Campbell, 457), and to write, "This image of Echo fading away to voice and bone, voice and stone seems to have fascinated Beckett." Campbell aptly describes the Echo myth as "the source of recurrent intratextual images in Beckett's works, such as closed spaces or refuges, the limbo world of neither life nor death, and the disembodied voice" (457).

However, beyond its biographical echoes, beyond its psychologi-cal connection with the death instinct called *Thanatos*, and beyond its mythological allusions, Beckett's stone implies something metaphysical that has yet to be explored, especially when he compares human beings to sand, stone and grit whose attributes are of life and movement. The theological hierarchy of humans, animals, plants and minerals – exem-plified by Thomas Aquinas, carried on by thinkers in the Renaissance period, and then by rationalists in the seventeenth and eighteenth centu-ries – will provide a different perspective from which to analyse both Beckett's cryptic conception of body and mind that transgresses the border of life and death, and that of humans and minerals. On the one hand, the 'fragmented' and 'disembodied' bodies in Beckett's works clearly deviate from the dualistic Cartesian framework that presupposes the two substances of body and mind. On the other hand, Leibniz's metaphysics dislocates the Cartesian dualism, analysing it in terms of elementary motions endowed with memories and feeling, which Leib-niz calls the monad: the indivisible, indestructible, unextended single substance whose essence is movement or 'force.' In my view, Molloy and Malone are the inhabitants of this domain, which cradles even the Unnamable who claims that, being "in the middle" of "an outside and an inside," he feels himself "vibrating […] on the one hand the mind, on the other the world," belonging to neither, with no thickness (Beckett 1958, 383).

"a heart beating in sand"

Beckett often portrays humans as stones. The prototype of this figuration is found in his first novel *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* [*Dream*], in which the narrator compares people around Belacqua – Smeraldina and others – to "lonely grit," and to "a scurry of grit in the mistral" (35-36). The late prose work *Ill Seen Ill Said* is full of descriptions such as those that liken an old woman to a gravestone. In either case, the reference to stone may not always signify death. Note that the narrator of *Dream* calls Belacqua a "Limbese" (50), and that he describes Belacqua as moving "with the shades of the dead and the dead-born and the unborn and the never-to-be born" (44). That is to say, the shades are compared to the souls in limbo, but, simultaneously, they are described as "a pulsing and shifting as of a heart beating in sand" (44) as if to signify life in death. In one respect, the image of "Echo's bones" and this image of "a heart beating in sand" are the two sides of the same coin, since both imply "life in death," but the former focuses on the "bone-death" connection, while the latter focuses on the "heart-life" connection. The juxtaposition of heart and sand, or life and mineral, has a striking effect upon the reader suggesting that this limbo world involves vitalism, dynamism and life.

The combined imagery of heart and sand in *Dream* is not coincidental, for a similar linkage appears recurrently in Beckett's oeuvre as indicated in the last lines of "Serena III," written in 1933:

> on the Bootersgrad breakwind and water
> the tide making the dun gulls in a panic
> the sands quicken in your hot heart
> hide yourself not in the Rock keep on the move
> keep on the move.

> (2002, 27)

Expressing the author-narrator's anxiety and frustration over remaining in the Dublin Bay districts, these lines stand for his strong desire for aimless flight, by illustrating the movement, velocity and life, instead of cessation, petrification and death.

Humans are dead like stones, but stones are alive like creatures in Beckett's writings. In a scene from *Watt* sand moves: "There is a great alp of sand, one hundred metres high, between the pines and the ocean, and there in the warm moonless night, when no one is looking, no one listening, in tiny packets of two or three millions the grains slip, all

together, a little slip of one or two lines maybe, and then stop, all to-
gether, not one missing, and that is all, that is all for that night, and
perhaps for ever that is all" (41). Again, the next scene from *Ill Seen Ill
Said* exhibits autonomic movements of stones: "Then all along the
verge the muffled thud of stone on stone. Of those spilling their excess
on those emergent. Only now and then at first. Then at ever briefer
intervals. Till one continuous din. With none to hear" (1996*, 63-64). In
these cases, the "great alp of sand" moves, and stones move, making
sounds, when unobserved; this alludes partly to George Berkeley's
questioning of unperceived objects, and partly to Leibniz's theory of
the dynamics of motion. For Leibniz, "no body is at rest" (qtd. in Aiton,
37), thus, any body, any stone, has an intrinsic power to move.[4]

In Limbo: War and *Ars combinatoria*
Bertrand Russell's analysis of Leibniz's principle of the "struggle for
life" provides a significant frame of reference for a consideration of the
limbo world in Beckett's works:

> Leibniz seems to have imagined a sort of war in the Limbo inhab-
> ited by essences all trying to exist; in this war, groups of compos-
> sibles combine, and the largest group of compossibles wins, like
> the largest pressure group in a political contest. Leibniz even uses
> this conception as a way of defining existence. He says: "The exis-
> tent may be defined as that which is compatible with more things
> than in anything incompatible with itself."
>
> (Russell 1984, 574)

Russell points out that Leibniz's doctrine of pre-established harmony
and the best possible world created solely by God's goodness contra-
dicts Leibniz's own theory of the "struggle for life," for the latter gives
mathematical reasons "as to why some things exist and others, equally
possible, do not" (Russell 1984, 574). Where number has the ultimate
power, pre-established harmony signifies nothing, thereby some sort of
war is inevitable.

The limbo theme of *Dream* reappears in *Watt* with an unmistak-
able allusion to Leibniz's pre-established harmony. Toward the end of
his stay on the ground floor of Mr. Knott's house, Watt wonders how
long he must remain there, when he is seized by a strange idea:

> For the service to be considered was not the service of one servant, but of two servants, and even three servants, and even of an infinity of servants, of *whom the first could not out till the second up, nor the second up till the third in*, […] every going, every being, every coming consisting with a being and a coming, a coming and a going, a going and a being, nay with all the beings and all the comings, with all the comings and all the goings, with all the goings and all the beings, of all the servants that had ever served Mr. Knott, of all the servants that ever would serve Mr. Knott. And in this long chain of consistence, *a chain stretching from the long dead to the far unborn, the notion of the arbitrary could only survive as the notion of a pre-established arbitrary.*
>
> (132; emphasis added)

Notable about this passage is the rule Beckett adopts for the procession of servants: "the first could not out till the second up, nor the second up till the third in." The procession follows this principle *ad infinitum,* in accordance with binary arithmetic. Both the binary system and the *ars combinatoria* (permutation and combination) are Leibniz's inventions and recur throughout Beckett's oeuvre.

The most celebrated use of the *ars combinatoria* is found in the scene of Molloy sucking stones. The way he evenly sucks the sixteen stones in his pockets requires a certain principle, as Molloy says, "to suck the stones in the way I have described, not haphazard, but with method, was also I think a bodily need" (1958, 81). The procession of stones is similar to that of servants in Mr. Knott's house. Arriving nowhere, both manifest Beckett's mockery of Leibniz's mathematically based metaphysics. Thus, using Leibniz's method of *ars combinatoria* to express a sort of war in limbo, Beckett dismantles Leibniz's system from within, but not wholly.

Becoming Metaphysical Stone
The metaphor of "the pulsing and shifting as of a heart beating in sand" in *Dream* shows rich variations later in his works. One is the image of Molloy in the ditch. Despite his progressive paralysis and stiffening legs, followed by "the sudden loss of half [his] toes" (1958, 56), Molloy keeps on moving perhaps with the "daily longing for the earth to swallow [him] up" (81). After a Herculean struggle to get out of the forest, Molloy sees before him a vast moor: "How could I drag myself over that vast moor, where my crutches would fumble in vain. Rolling per-

haps. And then? Would they let me roll on to my mother's door? […]. I lapsed down to the bottom of the ditch, It must have been spring, a morning in spring. […]. Molloy could stay, where he happened to be" (91).

Molloy in the ditch offers a variant of the heart-in-sand image, since his falling into the ditch can never be "the one true end" (Beckett 1995, 261). Besides, the loss of his toes indicates that the petrifaction of his body has already started. In a sense, the first part of *Molloy* may be summarized as a process of his transformation into stone until he reaches the ditch, which is none other than his "mother's door." From this door he enters mother earth; that is, the limbo world in which he is to continue his transformation, unnoticed, becoming another "heart beating in sand." He may not move freely, yet he can talk, for this stone man is inscribed with memories and feelings, as is the narrator of "The Calmative," whose first words are "I don't know when I died" (Beckett 1995, 61). So too a voice of the Unnamable which briefly states, "Yes, a head, but solid, solid bone, and you embedded in it, like a fossil in the rock" (1958, 148), might possibly be a figure of Molloy in the ditch.

So sophisticated is Beckett's concealment of the vision of people becoming stone in the text of *Malone Dies* that readers may be misled by Malone's words: "All is pretext, […] pretext for not coming to the point" (1958, 276). Certainly, Malone may invent creatures like Sapo and Moll and may abandon them one after another without a causal sequence of events in his narrative. However, Malone does have a vision of a creature's transformation into stone, probably from the moment when he first talks about his writing plan: "There will therefore be only three stories after all, that one [the story about the man and woman], then the one about the animal, then the one about the thing, a stone probably" (181-82). After a while, readers come across a scene where Malone plays with stones:

> And I loved to fall asleep holding in my hand a stone, a horse chestnut or a cone, and I would be still holding it when I woke, my fingers closed over it, in spite of sleep which makes a rag of the body, so that it may rest. And those of which I wearied, or which were ousted by new loves, I threw away, that is to say I cast round for a place to lay them where they would be at peace forever […]. Or I buried then, or threw them into sea with all my strength as far as possible from the land.
>
> (248)

We recall a biographical episode that Beckett told Büttner here, yet what we should read in this context is the status of a human being and a stone that reflects the theological, hierarchical chain of beings. Malone's stone game portrays not so much love as the caprice of the player. The same sort of caprice is observable in Molloy's sucking of stones and again in his sand play. The sixteen stones in Molloy's pockets may be loved by his hand and mouth, but, after all, they are to be thrown away by that same hand. So is the sand in his hand, for Molloy refers to his love of playing in the sand prior to the scene of sucking stones: "In the sand I was in my element, letting it trickle between my fingers, [...] flinging it in the air by handfuls, rolling in it" (68). Who knows whether the master who plays with stones or with sand sometimes follows the rule of *ars combinatoria*, or sometimes he leaves himself to a 'wholly arbitrary' decision?

On a different level, Malone realizes that he is but a grain of sand and a victim of the caprice of the Almighty: "And it is without excessive sorrow that I see us again as we are, namely to be removed grain by grain until the hand, wearied, begins to play, scooping us up and letting us trickle back into the same place, dreamily as the saying is" (224). Hence, Malone decides to make a creature in revenge on the Creator for his own suffering: "Yes, a little creature, I shall try and make a little creature, to hold in my arms, a little creature in my image, no matter what I say. And seeing what a poor thing I have made, or how like myself, I shall eat it. Then be alone a long time, unhappy, not knowing what my prayer should be nor to whom" (226).

Then, Malone, as a creator, introduces a little creature whose name is Macmann, which is Gaelic for "son of Man." Malone describes Macmann lying prostrate on the ground in the rain as motionless as a stone, perhaps for days, months, or years:

> And to tell the truth he was by temperament more reptile than bird and could suffer extensive mutilation and survive, happier sitting than standing and lying down than sitting, so that he sat and lay down at the least pretext and only rose again when *the élan vital* or *struggle for life* began to prod him in the arse again. *And a good half of his existence must have been spent in a motionlessness akin to that of stone*, not to say the three quarters, or even the four fifths.
>
> (243; emphasis added)

It is in the heavy rain, and in his extreme plight, when Macmann – whose motionlessness is compared to that of stone, and whose movement can be caused by "the élan vital or struggle for life," which is an allusion to Bergsonian-Leibnizian vitalism – starts his memorable rolling on the ground:

> But in the meantime in the end, the rain still falling with unabated violence in spite of his having turned over on his back, Macmann grew restless, flinging himself from side to side as though in a fit of the fever, buttoning himself and unbuttoning and finally rolling over and over in the same direction […]. And without reducing his speed he began to dream of a flat land where he would never have to rise again and hold himself erect in equilibrium, first on the right foot for example, then on the left, and where he might *come and go and so survive after the fashion of a great cylinder endowed with the faculties of cognition and volition.*
>
> (245-46; emphasis added)

Again, Macmann's dream of becoming "a great cylinder" is heralded by Molloy whose rolling into the ditch runs parallel with Macmann's endless rolling on the ground. Crawling like "a reptile," Molloy says: "And from time to time I raised myself on my hands, to get a better view. And in this way I located a number of keys at some distance from me, and these I reached by rolling over and over, like a great cylinder" (152-53). When Macmann survives after the fashion of a cylinder in his dream, he has moved beyond the mind and body dualism of Descartes to the realm of Leibniz's metaphysics in which both are analysed as elementary motions endowed with feelings. Here, in Macmann's dream, Beckett gives a shape to the long-harbored image of the "pulsing and shifting as of a heart beating in sand" in *Dream* in the context of Leibniz's *Monadology*.

Nothing evokes the autonomy of the monad with its internal principles of "perception" and "appetition" so much as "a great cylinder endowed with the faculties of cognition and volition," because Leibniz claims that, despite its closed structure, the monad is essentially open to the universe through its internal principles of "perception" and "appetition" (see Leibniz, 644). That is, according to the *Monadology*, the internal qualities and activities of the monads consist firstly of "perception," that is, the representation of the outer world, and secondly, "ap-

petition," which brings about the change or the passage from one perception to another (see Leibniz, 644). The cylinder's internal competence of "cognition and volition" displays Beckett's direct reference to the internal principles of "perception and appetition" of the monads.

Conclusion

The vitalistic attribute of stone enables Beckett to portray a stone's movement and life, which is similar to "a beating heart in sand," indicating that life after death is the limbo world of neither life nor death. For Beckett, our world is another limbo, in which humans are "grit," sand and stones whose conditions are controlled by the love or by the caprice of an unpredictable, unknowable hand. In addition, Beckett's limbo evokes a battlefield, where the unborn, yet-to-be born, and never-to-be born are struggling for life beyond the border of life and death. Therefore Beckett's recurrent use of the *ars combinatoria* never fails to place a bitter secondary irony over the irony used against Leibniz's doctrine of pre-established harmony.

My quest for Beckett's metaphysical stone arrives at another striking image of "a great cylinder endowed with cognition and volition" in Macmann's dream that symbolises none other than the image of the monad. Considering that the monad is indestructible and its essence is movement or 'force,' the rolling great cylinder presents itself as the indestructible and never-ending 'force.' That is to say, the two images envisioned by Beckett, – "a pulsing and shifting as of a heart beating in sand" in *Dream* and "a great cylinder endowed with cognition and volition" in *Malone Dies* – are now impeccably united into one, representing the monad.

Notes

1.   See Ariel's song in *The Tempest* (I. 2. 400-05): "Full fathoms five thy father lies. / Of his bones are coral made. / Those are pearls that were his eyes; / Nothing of him that doth fade / But doth suffer a sea-change / Into something rich and strange" (Shakespeare, 78).

2.   Samuel Beckett, 1933 typescript, Letter 57, "To Thomas MacGreevy, 6/12/33, 6 Clare St. Dublin," TCD MS 10402, Manuscripts Department, Trinity College Dublin (qtd. in Uhlmann, 151n).

3.   Sigmund Freud writes, "we shall be compelled to say that *the aim of all life is death'* and, looking backwards, that *'inanimate things existed before living ones,'*" thus asserting "the instinct to return to the inanimate state" (46).

4.   On the dynamics of motion/stasis in Beckett's works, see Bryden; and Mori.

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NOT RIGHTLY HUMAN:
Beckett and Animality

Shane Weller

This essay examines Beckett's treatment of the distinction between human and animal, a distinction that is certainly not one among others, since it arguably founds an entire philosophico-religious tradition running from Aristotle to Levinas, and including Descartes, Malebranche, Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger. I focus in particular on the impact on Beckett of his reading about Wolfgang Köhler's experiments on chimpanzees during the First World War and aim to show that Beckett submits the human/animal distinction to a double pressure, thereby producing a new conception of the so-called 'political animal.'

1. Encountering the Animal

Although there is no entry under either "animals" or "animality" in the *Grove Companion to Beckett*, the number of entries for specific kinds of animal is very large and includes ant, beaver, bees, Buridan's ass, cats, corncrake, Darwin's caterpillar, dogs, donkey, eels of Como, flies, goat, hens, hinny, horse, monkeys, morpion, parrots, rats, serotine, and sheep. Given such a range of animal life in an oeuvre so often characterized as minimalizing, it is remarkable that commentators have tended to neglect Beckett's treatment of animality – beyond, that is, the identification in his works of the Cartesian conception of the animal as machine or pure body (*corps, corpus*) lacking mind (*esprit, mens*) or soul (*âme, anima*). The reasons for this neglect certainly warrant analysis, not least because in Beckett the question of animality is as much a political one as it is philosophical or zoological, bearing directly upon Aristotle's epochal determination of the human as both the rational/speaking animal (*zoon logon ekhon*) and the political animal (*zoon politikon*).

Among those commentators who have addressed the treatment of animality in Beckett, there has been little agreement. In his 1967 article on *Molloy*, Philip H. Solomon argues that Beckett makes use of animals to communicate his contempt for the human. The *Grove Companion*, on the other hand, presents the many animals in Beckett's texts as serv-

ing for the most part an emblematic function: hens are described as "recurrent emblems" of "the futility of existence, culminating in foolish death" (251); horses are "emblems of man's brutality to beasts" (86); and parrots are "emblems of thought and speech" (428). In striking contrast, Steven Connor has argued that the singularity of Beckett's animals lies precisely in their resistance to both emblematization and anthropomorphism, and in their being presented for the most part in their radical alterity to the human. In *Molloy*, for instance, "the presence of animals arouses a powerful sense of *otherness*, of a world lying beyond the reach of human language and intention" (30; emphasis in the original). Thus, Beckett's rejection of "anthropomorphic insolence" (Beckett 1976, 202) would be nowhere more apparent than in his treatment of animal life. At first glance, it might seem that Connor's Beckett is simply repeating Hegel's claim that an "infinite difference" separates human and animal, and that, paradoxically, this difference lies precisely in the human being's knowing that it is an animal:

> Man is an animal, but even in his animal functions, he is not confined to the implicit, as the animal is; he becomes conscious of them, recognizes them, and lifts them, as, for instance, the process of digestion, into self-conscious science. In this way man breaks the barrier of his implicit and immediate character, so that precisely because he *knows* that he is an animal, he ceases to be an animal and attains knowledge of himself as spirit.
>
> <div align="right">(Hegel, 80; emphasis in the original)</div>

The alterity of the Beckettian animal would lie, however, precisely in its resistance to sublation (*Aufhebung*), and would thus be akin to Derrida's conception of the animal as the absolutely other (*le tout autre*), its gaze "uninterpretable, unreadable, undecidable, abyssal and secret" (Derrida, 29; my translation).

If one accepts Connor's claim regarding the alterity of the animal in Beckett, then the question becomes: What kinds of human response to this alterity does Beckett offer us, and which of these responses, if any, does he underwrite? On the one hand, there are certainly occasions in Beckett when the alterity of the animal is not only recognized but also respected. One example would be the narrator's response to the "completely white horse" in *From an Abandoned Work*, which Connor describes as an almost "religious awe" (Connor, 30). On the other hand, however, Beckett repeatedly presents human beings attempting to mas-

ter or appropriate animals through their emblematization, their anthropomorphization, their being raised for slaughter, and, more generally, their being made to serve a human end. Furthermore, with very few exceptions (the stoats in *From an Abandoned Work* being one), Beckett does not present animals as violent; rather, violence tends to originate in the human and be directed either against other human beings or against animals. This comportment towards animal life is in accordance with a philosophico-religious tradition that passes by way of both Kant and Descartes and stretches all the way back to Genesis: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" (1:26-27).

All of the above would appear to support the argument that Beckett underwrites an ethical ecological attitude to animal life. Through an acknowledgement of animal life in its radical (non-Hegelian) alterity to the human, through a respectful awe in the face of that alterity, and a critique of the impulse to master it and to make it serve a human end, Beckett would offer us the model of an ethical hospitality to animal life that would break with an anthropocentric and anthropomorphic tradition that Derrida sees as running from Aristotle to Levinas, and that would include Descartes, Kant, Heidegger, and Lacan, among so many others. This tradition would constitute the philosophical substrate of what Derrida terms an unrelenting "war against the animal" (140; my translation), in which the animal is repeatedly thought in terms of lack (*manque*) – as "poor in world" (*weltarm*), according to Heidegger – and is determined above all by its inability to respond (*répondre*). For Derrida, those writers who escape this tradition include Montaigne, Nietzsche, Adorno and Kafka. On the basis of Connor's reading, and the other textual evidence referred to above, it would appear that Beckett may be added to the list of those who challenge the tradition that makes of the animal the animal-machine. In Beckett, however, things are rather more complicated than this.

2. The Suffering Animal

In *L'Animal donc que je suis*, Derrida refers us to Jeremy Bentham for the question that should be asked of the animal. This question is not "Can animals think?" or "Do animals possess a mind or a soul" or "Can animals respond?" but rather "Can animals suffer?" (Derrida, 48). And to that question, Derrida observes, the answer is undoubtedly "Yes." As

observed above, in Beckett violence very rarely comes from animals, and animals are frequently presented as suffering beings, as victims, or as "Poor dear dumb beasts" (Beckett 1995, 67). In this, Beckett counters the Christian view (expressed by Malebranche, among others) that suffering results from sin and thus always has a meaning, and that therefore animals do not (indeed cannot) suffer, since, lacking both a soul and free will, they cannot sin. That Beckett was fascinated from an early point by the treatment of animals as in some sense human, and thus in the instability of any clear distinction between human and animal, is evident from his having read E. P. Evans's *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* (1906). Not only do Beckett's animals appear, *contra* Malebranche, to suffer, but his works contain numerous instances of human beings expressing sympathy for that suffering. In *All That Fall*, for instance, Maddy Rooney's sympathy for suffering animals anticipates Elizabeth Costello's response to animal suffering in J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (1999).

Such sympathy is, however, at odds with that sense of radical – even infinite – difference which also characterizes the human being's relation to the animal in Beckett. In fact, Beckett tends to gender this sympathy for the suffering animal, making it (as does Coetzee after him) predominantly maternal in nature. It is significant that in the following story, recounted by Beckett to James Knowlson, it is the mother who both feels for, and acts to release, the trapped dog while the father sleeps on, oblivious to the sounds of the suffering animal:

> I'll tell you an anecdote about my mother and dogs. My father was alive at that time. He was sleeping. She was awake. And there was the sound of a dog barking in the distance, barking, barking, barking. She got up in the middle of the night and went out and tracked down where the dog was by the bark; she followed the bark. It was in the garden of a family called Goode about five hundred yards from the house. She got into the garden somehow and found this unfortunate dog in a trap, trapped. And she released the dog.
>
> (qtd. in Knowlson and Knowlson, 7)

The fact that the trap-setter's name here is Goode is an irony that Beckett would not have missed. However, whether or not the attempt to alleviate the suffering of an animal is in fact an unambiguously ethical action becomes rather less easy to determine once one enters Beckett's works, where the alterity of the animal means that any human interven-

tion is liable to be catastrophic. When, in *Company*, the child attempts to improve the condition of a hedgehog, the 'release' granted the animal is of a very different kind, namely death. Furthermore, in Beckett the desire to destroy all animal life is not simply unethical, if only because it is orientated towards a reduction to zero of suffering. The killing of the flea – if it is a flea – in *Endgame*, for instance, is arguably carried out in order to put an end not just to a life of suffering but to life 'as' suffering. In Beckett, then, this kind of killing would have to be distinguished from the slaughtering of animals to provide food and other materials for human use, and it cannot be neatly categorized as either unethical or psychotic.

3. Becoming Animal
Thus far, it would appear that, with a few complicating turns, Beckett insists upon the radical alterity of the animal to the human, that he adumbrates both an ethical and an unethical comportment towards animal life, and that he underwrites the former, principally by critiquing the anthropomorphization of the animal. However, we also have to consider the fact that, while animal life is indeed repeatedly presented in its radical difference from the human, Beckett disintegrates the Cartesian human/animal distinction, producing neither a rational animal nor Aristotle's political animal, but rather a human-becoming-animal that counterpoints Kafka's animal-becoming-human in his "A Report to an Academy" (1917), in which an ape called Red Peter reports on his being subjected to a process of humanization. In Beckett, it is often precisely the reverse of such humanization that takes place: both Molloy and Macmann, for instance, come to bear an ever closer resemblance to the "creeping thing" of Genesis. This dehumanization carries the rational animal back in the direction of the Cartesian animal-machine, but it does so in a manner that wrecks the very distinction between rational and mechanical animal.

Descartes's conception of the animal is neatly summarized in Wilhelm Windelband's *History of Philosophy*, which Beckett first read in the spring of 1933 and from which he transcribed the following passage:

> Animals remain, for Descartes, bodies; their "sensations" are only nervous movements, out of which stimulations of the motor system arise in accordance with reflex mechanism. In the human body, however, the mental substance is present at the same time,

and in consequence of this co-existence the storm of the animal
spirits in the pineal gland excites a disturbance in the mental sub-
stance also, which manifests itself in the latter as an unclear and
indistinct idea, *i.e.* as sense-perception, as emotion, or as passion.
(Windelband, 414; cf. TCD MS 10967)

Less than two years later, Beckett encountered an anti-Cartesian con-
ception of animality in Robert S. Woodworth's *Contemporary Schools
of Psychology* (1931), from which he took notes on the researches of
the German psychologist Wolfgang Köhler, whose experiments at the
Anthropoid Station on Tenerife between 1913 and 1917 led him to
challenge E. L. Thorndike's argument that, unlike human beings,
"Animals learn, neither by reasoning nor by imitation, but by trial and
error." In his *The Mentality of Apes* (1917; English translation, 1925),
Köhler addresses the question of "whether the chimpanzee, represent-
ing probably the most intelligent group of subhuman animals, showed
any genuine intelligence" (Woodworth 142). His conclusion is that in
fact apes learn not simply through "trial and error" (transcribed by
Beckett as "trial and terror") but also through "insight." In other words,
for Köhler, the strict Cartesian distinction between human and animal is
simply untenable.

Beckett draws on the description of Köhler's animal experiments
in the mime *Act without Words I*, where, significantly, Köhler himself
becomes the victimizer: the very attempt to determine whether the ape
possesses "genuine intelligence" becomes a mode of torture. It is, how-
ever, with a rather different Köhler in mind that one has to approach
Beckett's (ultimately unrealized) choice of a photograph of two chim-
panzees playing chess for the cover of *Murphy* (1938). Seeing Murphy
and Mr Endon as chimpanzees is not necessarily to see them simply
through Cartesian glasses as pure unthinking automata. Rather, the
animal is presented as no longer simply other to the human, and the
presenting of that which is not "rightly human" – as Murphy is de-
scribed by the chandler's "eldest waste product" (77) – as a chimpanzee
is not necessarily an insult, as it is when, in *Proust*, Beckett observes
that friendship, as "the attempt to communicate where no communica-
tion is possible," is "merely a simian vulgarity" (63), or when, in *End-
game*, Hamm calls Clov an "ape" (1990, 130) because he cannot tell the
difference between dialogue and an aside.

There can be little doubt that the Cartesian conception of the hu-
man/animal distinction casts a long shadow over Beckett's own concep-

tion of the animal, and there are certainly Cartesian-Christian voices in Beckett that insist upon the radicality of that distinction. In *How It Is*, for instance, the speaker tells the following story about a llama, to whom he turns in search of comfort: "she would not come to me I would go to her huddle in her fleece"; this story is immediately negated, however, by other (Cartesian-Christian) voices: "but they add no a beast here no the soul is de rigueur the mind too a minimum of each" (15). In Beckett, then, there is a war between the voice that would insist upon the distinction between human and animal and the voice that would negate or at least complicate it. In other words, the human animal is one more of Beckett's pseudocouples, governed by the principle *nec tecum nec sine te* (neither with you nor without you), as Beckett expresses it in a letter of 29 December 1957 to Alan Schneider (Harmon, 24). Adorno's observations in *Aesthetic Theory* that "In the similarity of clowns to animals the likeness of humans to apes flashes up" and that "the constellation animal/fool/clown is a fundamental layer of art" (119) certainly appear to owe a great deal to his appreciation of Beckett.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Beckett's problematization of the human/animal distinction is certainly at its most forceful when it comes to the chimpanzee, from which he draws what is arguably one of the most significant modes of expression in his oeuvre, namely body language. In early 1935, Beckett read and took a few notes on Otto Rank's *The Trauma of Birth* (1924; English translation1929). In a footnote, Rank mentions Köhler's *The Mentality of Apes*, and, on this occasion, Beckett writes a memo to himself to read Köhler's book. The footnote that attracted Beckett's eye reads as follows:

> To a quite primitive stage of development belongs the mode of representation on one's own body and from one's own material, as it is re-established, for example, in hysterical attacks (Ferenczi, *Gebärdensprache*); Freud first called attention thereto, by showing how the hysteric represents on himself also the action, for instance the embrace, desired from the love partner […]. One must add to this the interesting observations of Köhler in his *Mentality of Apes*, where he shows that apes express what they want by indicating it on their own bodies. Thus a chimpanzee expressed the embrace which her master should give her by putting her arms round her own body.
>
> (Rank, 80; cf. TCD MS 10971/8)

According to Köhler, then, the female chimpanzee uses her own body as the stage for an enactment of that which she desires from the other. Her gesture of self-embracement both substitutes and calls for the other's embrace. That the possibility of such a substitutive-expressive language of the body would stay with Beckett is clear not least from his decision, forty years later, to have May in *Footfalls* (1976) embrace herself in a manner that recalls the female chimpanzee observed by Köhler. Indeed, the movement in his later dramatic works towards a purely bodily language is arguably a movement towards the language of an animal, not as what the *Oxford English Dictionary* terms a being "endowed with life, sensation, and voluntary motion," but as a suffering being, defined by lack not in Descartes's, Kant's, or Heidegger's sense, but because this being 'experiences' lack and 'expresses' that lack by making of her own body both a stage and a substitute. And, as I have sought to demonstrate elsewhere, the act of self-embracement in Beckett has to be thought in relation to another absent 'master,' namely the father, and this in turn lies at the heart of the only bearable version of the political in Beckett, namely the embrace of a highly paradoxical relation without relation (see Weller 2007, 141-59).

While countering an entire philosophico-religious tradition characterized by its emphatic anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, Beckett's disintegration of the human/animal distinction is not the denial, negation, annihilation, or sublation of that distinction. Rather, in Beckett, animals – or at least some animals – become, on occasion, those pseudocoupled beings in which the cognitive and the inorganic, mind and stone, or what Heidegger terms the "world-forming" (*weltbildend*) and the "worldless" (*weltlos*), are brought into a highly paradoxical relation without relation. Nowhere is this more evident than in the following passage from *How It Is*: "some animals still the sheep like granite outcrops a horse I hadn't seen standing motionless back bent head sunk animals know" (34). What it is that "animals know" remains, for the no longer strictly Cartesian (or indeed Kantian, Hegelian, or Heideggerian) human, a great unknown, and it is, of course, just such "ignorance" that Beckett identifies as the terrain of his own art (qtd. in Shenker, 148). As a remark made by Beckett to Patrick Bowles reveals, this unknown knowing of the 'animals' is not located simply in an animal being that would lie outside human being; rather, for Beckett, that animal which knows lies within the human, and indeed within that which, according to Descartes and the tradition to which he belongs,

humanizes the human, namely the mind: "It is as if there were a little animal inside one's head, for which one tried to find a voice; to which one tries to give a voice. That is the *real* thing. The rest is a game" (Beckett qtd. in Knowlson and Knowlson, 111; emphasis in the original).

In place of the Cartesian *res cogitans*, then, Beckett offers us a little voiceless animal for which – or for whom – he tries to find a voice. No doubt, this makes of Beckett's human the not "rightly human," but it also makes of his animal something other than the non-human. This is because the human/animal distinction – which, as both Derrida and Agamben argue, lies at the very foundation not only of Western metaphysics but also of Western politics and ethics – is subjected to a double pressure in Beckett's works. On the one hand, this distinction is radically expanded, to the point at which it becomes absolute: the animal becomes the absolutely other (Derrida's *tout autre*), an unreadable eye. On the other hand, however, this distinction is collapsed, such that the very essence of the human is resituated in the animal. Value, here, is located neither in identity nor in alterity, and it is for this reason that Beckett's response to the very concept of animality, and, in particular, to what Derrida terms the "war against the animal" on which an entire anthropocentric philosophico-religious tradition depends, may be described as what I have elsewhere termed an "anethical" response; that is, a double movement, both towards and away from any ethical position, including Derrida's "ethic of hospitality" (see Weller 2006).

In any attempt to think the politics of Beckett's oeuvre, and to determine what becomes of Aristotle's *zoon politikon*, one has to return to the question of animality in its anethicality, and in particular to Köhler's female chimpanzee, a suffering being who makes of her body a language. For all Adorno's sense of affinity with Beckett, the expressiveness of this chimpanzee in Beckett's works is not that of Adorno's animals, of whom the latter writes in *Aesthetic Theory*: "there is nothing so expressive as the eyes of animals – especially apes – which seem objectively to mourn that they are not human" (113). If, in Beckett, mourning is always that of the not "rightly human," it is not on account of a failure to be human. Rather, this mourning is that of a being whose suffering derives from a sense of its "irremediable solitude" (Beckett 1970, 63), but a solitude that certainly does not exclude the torments of what in *How It Is* Beckett describes as the "orgy of false being life in common" (76).

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"LITTLE PEOPLE" IN *LE DÉPEUPLEUR*:
Beckett and the Eighteenth Century

Yoshiyuki Inoue

This paper aims to study how eighteenth-century natural history operates in Beckett's *Le dépeupleur*. Regarding its "little people," I show that they can be compared to insects and animals. Firstly, I suggest that the bodies on the cylinder's floor can be regarded as animalcules under the microscope as in Diderot's *Le rêve de d'Alembert*. Secondly, I demonstrate similarities in the way insects are depicted in *Le dépeupleur* and in Voltaire's *Micromégas*. Thirdly, I discuss the "dépeupleur" in connection with Swift. Lastly, Beckett is considered to be a writer who aims for "mindlessness" by reducing the number of animals in the brain.

In this paper I would like to explore the "little people" in *Le dépeupleur* (1970) in connection with the eighteenth century, especially with reference to Diderot, Voltaire, and Swift.

First, let us consider the relationship between Beckett and Diderot. In *De l'interprétation de la nature* (1754), Diderot compares the movement of self-reflection to that of bees: "rentrer en soi et en sortir sans cesse. C'est le travail de l'abeille" (to return into the self and resurface from there again and again. That is bees' work; 1964a, 185). Such an incessant to and fro resembles the movement of the bodies in *Le dépeupleur*. In this work, small bodies climb the ladders, enter the tunnels in the upper wall of the cylinder and come out again. Remarkably, Beckett represents the niches in the wall as *alvéoles*, or 'alveoli,' a term used for honeycomb cells: "Niches ou alvéoles. Ce sont des cavités creusées à même le mur à partir d'une ceinture imaginaire" ("The niches or alcoves. These are cavities sunk in that part of the wall which lies above an imaginary line"; 1970, 10; 1972, 11). From this description, we can imagine that the cylinder is a kind of beehive. Although they have to manipulate the ladders to arrive at the niches, the small bodies constantly enter and leave the *alvéoles*.

In *Le rêve de d'Alembert* (1769), Diderot also compares the world to a great beehive:

Avez-vous quelquefois vu un essaim d'abeilles s'échapper de leur ruche?… Le monde, ou la masse générale de la matière, est la grande ruche… Les avez-vous vues s'en aller former à l'extrémité de la branche d'un arbre une longue grappe de petits animaux ailés, tous accrochés les uns aux autres par les pattes?… Cette grappe est un être, un individu, un animal quelconque.

Have you ever seen a swarm of bees abandon their hive?... The world, or the general mass of matter, is a great beehive… Have you seen them go off to form, at the extremity of a tree branch, an elongated cluster of little winged animals, all clinging to each other by their legs?... This cluster is a being, an individual, some kind of animal.

(1964b, 291)

Beckett must have taken an interest in this description of bees, for we find some items taken from Diderot's *Rêve* in Beckett's "Dream" Notebook. In item [965], titled "R. de d'A.," Beckett notes: "The swarm of bees (continuous & contiguous)" (qtd. in Pilling, 136). This image of swarming insects is very important to *Le dépeupleur*, because Beckett regards the gathering of the little bodies on the floor as a "pullulement central" ("teeming precinct":1970, 26; 1972, 29). The term *pulluler*, which is translated by the author as 'to teem' (1972, 29), suggests swarming bees.[1]

Another clustering image can be found in Diderot's description of animalcules observed under a sort of microscope in the *Rêve*:

Il avait imité avec sa main droite le tube d'un microscope, et avec sa gauche, je crois, l'orifice d'un vase. Il regardait dans le vase par ce tube, et il disait: "Le Voltaire en plaisantera tant qu'il voudra, mais l'Anguillard [Needham] a raison; j'en crois mes yeux; je les vois: combien il y en a! comme ils vont! comme ils viennent! comme ils frétillent!…" Le vase où il apercevait tant de générations momentanées, il le comparait à l'univers; il voyait dans une goutte d'eau l'histoire du monde. Cette idée lui paraissait grande; il la trouvait tout à fait conforme à la bonne philosophie qui étudie les grands corps dans les petits. Il disait: "Dans la goutte d'eau de Needham, tout s'exécute et se passe en un clin d'œil. […]. Suite indéfinie d'animalcules dans l'atome qui fermente, même suite in-

définie d'animalcules dans l'autre atome qu'on appelle la Terre. […]. Tout change, tout passe, il n'y a que le tout qui reste. Le monde commence et finit sans cesse; il est à chaque instant à son commencement et à sa fin."

He imitated with his right hand the tube of a microscope, and with his left hand, I believe, the opening of a vase. He was looking into the vase through this tube saying: "Let the Voltaire ridicule it as much as he likes, but the Anguillard is right; I believe my eyes; I see them: how many of them there are! They come! They go! They wriggle!..." He compared the vase where he discovered so many momentary generations to the universe; he saw the history of the world in a drop of water. This appeared like a great idea to him; he found it in complete conformity with that good philosophy that studies large bodies in small ones. He said: "In the drop of water of Needham, all is acted out and happens in the twinkling of an eye. […]. An endless series of animalcules in the atom that ferments, the same endless series of animalcules in the other atom that we call Earth. […]. Everything changes, everything passes away, it is just the whole that remains. The world begins and ends incessantly; it is, at every instant, at its beginning and at its end."

(1964b, 299-300)

Similarly, the cylinder in *Le dépeupleur* can be compared to the microscope, and the small bodies there to the animalcules seen through the tube or vase in the *Rêve*. Although the little bodies in the cylinder are in perpetual flux, the large body, or the cylinder itself, remains as it is. In the manner of "la bonne philosophie," Beckett's narrator is observing the larger world in the smaller one.

Let me draw attention to the word *frétiller* in the quotation from Diderot's *Rêve*. This verb means 'to wriggle.' It would be possible to introduce the word *grouiller* (to swarm) as synonymous with the verb. As a matter of fact, Beckett, before producing the phrase "pullulement central," had used this term in a typescript of the work, writing "grouillement central" (swarming or wriggling in the center).[2] In these expressions, we can find common imagery: tiny bodies or animalcules that are swarming, wriggling, or teeming.

This stirring image of little creatures can also be seen in Leibniz's *Monadologie* (1720), composed in 1714. In this study the philosopher used the word *grouillement* for fish moving in a pond: "[…] à peu pres

comme il en paroîtroit dans un étang à une distance, dans laquelle on verroit un mouvement confus et grouillement pour ainsi dire de poissons de l'étang, sans discerner les poissons mêmes" ([…] more or less as it would appear in a pond seen from a distance, in which one could see a confused movement and wriggling, as it were, of the pond's fish, without making out the fish themselves; sect. 69).[3] Here one comes across another representation of 'teeming,' tiny bodies in connection with the eighteenth century. In the manuscript of Beckett's short piece *Bing* (1966), the author at first thought of insects in a pond: "Certains insectes des étangs" (certain pond insects; qtd. in Federman and Fletcher, 325). From these details, we can safely assume that Beckett, when first composing *Le dépeupleur*, bore the image of little creatures in mind. In other words, Beckett, like Diderot and Leibniz, considers human beings from a biological point of view.

The next important connection with the eighteenth century involves Beckett and Voltaire, especially *Le dépeupleur* and *Micromégas* (1752). There are two citations from Voltaire listed under the verb *dépeupler* in Littré's *Dictionnaire*. One is from *La princesse de Babylone* (1768) and the other is from *Alzire, ou les Américains* (1736). These suggest a minimal but potential relationship between Beckett and Voltaire.

The narrator of *Micromégas* depicts the earth as "notre petite fourmilière" (96), that is, 'our little anthill.' The small bodies in *Le dépeupleur* sometimes show aggression and exchange no words with each other. Accordingly, it is possible to count these "little people" (15, 63) in the cylinder as ants, or emmets, in the same way as Voltaire does. In *Happy Days* (1961), Winnie, discovering an ant on her mound, says to Willie in a shrill voice: "an emmet, a live emmet!" (40). This scene conveys to us Beckett's awareness that some of the finest minds in the eighteenth century enjoyed looking on people as diminutive beings. Samuel Johnson, for instance, in *The Lives of the English Poets* (1779-80), portrays Alexander Pope as follows: "He [Pope] very frequently professes contempt of the world, and represents himself as looking on mankind, sometimes with gay indifference, as on emmets of a hillock, below his serious attention" (158). Pope himself, in *An Essay on Man* (1733-34), states that human beings should learn from ants and bees "small People's genius, policies" (111). From these, it would be reasonable to infer that the figures of minute beings, such as ants or bees, were popular in the writings of the eighteenth century – and Voltaire is no exception.

The inhabitant of Saturn in *Micromégas*, who travels with the giant through the universe, is called "le petit nain de Saturne" (the tiny dwarf of Saturn; 111). As this description suggests, a tendency to regard different beings as minuscule is ubiquitous in this fiction. Some of earth's philosophers, who are scooped up in the giant's hand with their ship, are also termed "mite philosophique" or "petites mites" (111, 113). Although the French word *mite* does not appear in *Le dépeupleur*, the English word 'mite' is used by Beckett in *The Lost Ones* (30, 61) as the counterpart of the French word *bambin* (1970, 27, 54) in the sense of a small child. Certainly, the French *mite* and the English 'mite' have subtly different meanings, but both can signify a little animal, or a minute insect, such as an arachnid. In his *Essay on Man*, after the interrogative "Why has not Man a microscopic eye?", Pope rhetorically questions: "what the use, were finer optics giv'n, / T' inspect a mite, not comprehend the heav'n?" (38-39). From these details, we can assert that Beckett's decision to use the word 'mite' in *The Lost Ones* is quite suitable.

Voltaire provides us with another way of looking at people on earth. The narrator of *Micromégas* depicts the surface of the earth as a *taupinière* (molehill) and regards humans as "petits êtres qui rampent ici" (small beings crawling here; 103). Similarly, the "little people" in *Le dépeupleur* crawl in the tunnels: "Ils peuvent ramper à tâtons dans les tunnels en quête de rien" ("They may crawl blindly in the tunnels in search of nothing"; 1970, 27; 1972, 31). However, the most remarkable passage in *Micromégas* comes when the colossal hero tries to listen to the voice of those minute earthlings, or tiny animals, he has scooped up and placed on his nail. Using a nail paring, Micromégas fabricates a kind of hearing aid, like a megaphone, in order to catch the feeble voice of the minute people in his hand. The narrator represents the voices that he hears as "le bourdonnement de nos insectes" (the buzzing of our insects; 107). This is very similar to the buzzing sound of bees. In *Le dépeupleur*, Beckett describes the muted sounds that the light in the cylinder makes in an almost identical manner: "Parmi tous les composants dont elle [la rumeur] est faite l'oreille finit par distinguer un faible grésillement d'insecte qui est celui de la lumière elle-même et le seul qui ne varie pas" ("Among all the components the sum of which it is the ear finally distinguishes a faint stridulence as of insects which is that of the light itself and the one invariable"; 1970, 33-34; 1972, 38). This faint discordant sound produced as by insects could be considered a variation of "le bourdonnement de nos insectes de là-bas" (the buzz-

ing of our insects from over there) in *Micromégas*. This similarity, among others, suggests Voltaire's influence upon Beckett's *Dépeupleur*.

There are other instances that show a close connection between Beckett and Voltaire. As some scholars have pointed out, Beckett uses a quotation from Voltaire's *Candide, ou l'optimisme* (1759), "*Che Sciagura*" as the title of a piece he published in *TCD, A College Miscellany* (Fletcher 94; Cohn 10-11). The sentences in *Le depéupleur*, "Tout est donc pour le mieux" and "tout n'est pas encore tout à fait pour le mieux" ("So all is for the best" and "all is not yet quite for the best"; 1970, 37, 53; 1972, 42, 61), are critical allusions not only to Leibniz (Hamilton and Hamilton, 189) but also to *Candide*, in which Voltaire mocks Leibniz's optimism in the teachings of Dr. Pangloss: "tout est au mieux dans ce monde" (all is for the best in this world; 20). In addition, the expression "l'être pensant" ("thinking being") in *Le dépeupleur* (1970, 35; 1972, 39) is found in *Micromégas* (100-01). Finally, by observing minute beings on the earth and mistaking their action for propagation, the Saturnian gives a cry of joy, imitating Fontenelle's expression: "*Ah!* […] *j'ai pris la nature sur le fait*" (I caught nature in the act; Voltaire 1960, 106; emphasis in the original). His remark reminds us of Hamm's lines in *Endgame*: "Imagine if a rational being came back to earth, wouldn't he be liable to get ideas into his head if he observed us long enough. (*Voice of rational being.*) Ah, good, now I see what it is, yes, now I understand what they're at!" (Beckett 1958, 33). These details strongly suggest Beckett's abiding interest in Voltaire.

It could be easily imagined that the optical instrument that enables Micromégas to observe the dwarfs on the earth is a sort of microscope. Similarly, by using the cylinder as a microscope, the narrator of *Le dépeupleur* scrutinizes the mechanism of the heat and light inside it. Interestingly, however, Beckett calls them "les deux pulsations" in a typescript of the work.[4] In addition, the cylinder experiences an "halètement" ("restlessness") or "un souffle sur sa fin" ("panting at the last") and "respiration" (Beckett 1970, 7-8; 1972, 7). It is therefore not only a seeing and hearing instrument but also a human body where "little people" are subsisting, like Hobbes's Leviathan.[5]

There is then an element of eighteenth-century natural history in *Le dépeupleur* through which various beings are sometimes regarded as "little people," animals, insects, or animalcules.[6] The French title of *Le dépeupleur* can be closely related to these images. Although Beckett

told Brian Finney that the title was meant to evoke the line from Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* (1820), "Un seul être vous manque, et tout est dépeuplé" (You lose one person, and the whole world is depopulated) (Finney, 11), this word should also be considered in the historical context of the population problem in the eighteenth century.[7]

The central floor of the cylinder is overcrowded with "little people": "L'identification est rendue difficile par la presse et par l'obscurité" ("The gloom and press make recognition difficult"; Beckett 1970, 12; 1972, 13). Beckett must have thought it desirable to decrease the number of bodies and perhaps to treat human beings in the manner of animals, thereby sharing Jonathan Swift's attitude in *A Modest Proposal* (1729). In this tract, Swift, by means of "le mythe animal" (Pons, viii) and by using political arithmetic satirically, describes the "projector's" method of assuring that "the Number of People will be [...] lessened in the Kingdom" (Swift 1971, 116).[8] Beckett's "dépeupleur" can be viewed as addressing the problem of overpopulation by his aim to reduce the number of "little people" to make the physical and mental conditions in the cylinder less tormenting or, borrowing the name of a character in *Candide*, he wants to introduce 'pang-loss.'

As Frederik N. Smith indicates in *Beckett's Eighteenth Century* (36-37), in his *Discourse Concerning the Mechanical Operation of the Spirit* (1710), Swift states that "the Brain is only a Crowd of little Animals" (279). This idea is likely to have occasioned Beckett to feel the need of a 'depopulator.' By reducing the number of 'little animals' in the cylinder, Beckett might, paradoxically, have sought to promote the welfare there. This ideal is expressed by the author again and again in different wording: "Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness" in *Ill Seen Ill Said* (59) and "Profounds of […] mindlessness" in *Ohio Impromptu* (288), to give just two examples. Viewed in this light, the small bodies in *Le dépeupleur* come to be seen as little animals preserving memories in the brain, and the niches in the upper wall of the cylinder as dens or lairs where the animals survive.

In his *Confessions* (397-401), Augustine provides us with the image of fields, dens, and innumerable caverns in memory that are infinitely peopled (*peuplées* in French) by animals and things (book 10, ch. 17). Consequently, to drive these little animals out of the dens and to decrease their number would lead to the loss of memories. In *Le dépeupleur*, Beckett might have wished for the condition of "des sans mémoire" ("forgetters"; 1970, 48; 1972, 54). Each body can be a hunter and the hunted, that is, a little animal as the object of the hunt.[9] This

would explain the opening lines of *Le dépeupleur*: "Séjour où des corps vont cherchant chacun son dépeupleur. Assez vaste pour permettre de chercher en vain. Assez restreint pour que toute fuite soit vaine" ("Abode where lost bodies roam each searching for its lost one. Vast enough for search to be in vain. Narrow enough for flight to be in vain"; Beckett 1970, 7; 1972, 7). By "devouring" other people, not with "a fish fork" (Beckett 1961, 12) but with their "eyes" (Beckett 1972, 29, 62), the "little people" also eat up memories. In other words, by 'ocular' cannibalism, Beckett tries to lose the bodies in the cylinder and to accomplish "mindlessness" there. The French title of *Le dépeupleur* finally changes into *The Lost Ones* in the English version. This is perhaps Beckett's "best and greatest Art, the Art to blot." [10]

Notes

I am grateful to Angela Moorjani for her help with the translations from the French. Except for the quotations from Beckett's works or where otherwise noted, all translations are ours.

1.   It is well known that Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees* (1714) compares society with a beehive. On Beckett's *Molloy* and Mandeville's work, see Knowlson (374); on *The Fable of the Bees*, see Willey (96).

2.   RUL MS 1536/5, leaf 13.

3.   On Beckett and Leibniz, see Mori (357, 366, 368, n. 9).

4.   RUL MS 1536/7, leaf 1. The word *pulsation* is also used in *Le dépeupleur* (32).

5.   Beckett's "little people," however, unlike Hobbes's Leviathan, are mostly in movement, or 'stirring still,' not 'standing still,' as can be seen on the title page of the *Leviathan* (1651).

6.   It is interesting to note that the expression "ce petit peuple" of *Le dépeupleur* (14, 55) can be seen in a French edition of *Gulliver's Travels* (Swift, 1880-1882, I: 160, 185, II: 133). On a connection between *Le dépeupleur* and *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), see Finney (11) and Brater (192, n. 29). Connor states that "Beckett shows a liking for the word 'little' when describing or imagining animals" (34). Furthermore, in his *Dictionnaire*, Littré states that the word *grimpeurs* is a term in natural history meaning certain birds: "1° Ordre d'oiseaux dont les doigts sont conformés de manière à leur permettre de grim-

per facilement le long des arbres, etc.." Beckett applies this term to the climbers of the ladder in *Le dépeupleur* (19).

7.   At a very early stage of writing *Le dépeupleur*, Beckett had the concept of 'population' in mind. RUL MS 1536/9, dated "USSY MAI 66," shows his original conception of the work, where he writes: "Population et notion" (leaf 1).

8.   Peter Hughes, in connection with the political arithmetic in Swift's *Modest Proposal*, states that Beckett has parodied in *Le dépeupleur* the "projector's" happy attitude to his inhuman certitude (245). On the political arithmetic in *A Modest Proposal*, see Nishiyama (103-17).

9.   It is deserving of note that Beckett describes the central arena as a "hunting ground" (1972, 43).

10.   This line from Pope's *First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace* is quoted in Beckett (1976-82). The edition of Pope's work that I consulted gives the line as follows: "The last and greatest Art, the Art to blot" (1953, 219). On Beckett and Pope, see Smith (132-55).

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TELEVISION'S "SAVAGE EYE": PHANTASMAGORICAL AND VIRTUAL BODIES

… *BUT THE CLOUDS…* AND A YEATSIAN PHANTASMAGORIA

Minako Okamuro

The woman in *…but the clouds…* quotes from Yeats's "The Tower," a poem in which Yeats, who was familiar with séances, recalls the dead. "The Tower" is closely related to Yeats's book of occult philosophy, *A Vision*, in which he refers to 'phantasmagoria,' projections of images of ghosts, in discussing "dreaming back" by the Spirit. By repeatedly reproducing scenes, M's voice, called V, seems to be dreaming back a solitary séance by M, conducted by his past self to see the woman without. For Beckett, television thus produced a version of Yeats's phantasmagoria, a projection of the inner ghost outward.

1. *…but the clouds…* as a Séance Play

Ghostly figures haunt Beckett's plays for radio, theatre, and television, many of which present scenes that resemble séances. In *Embers*, written for radio, Henry conjures up his dead father, saying, "My father, back from the dead, to be with me" (255). In *Not I*, written for the stage, Mouth tells the seemingly deceased woman's story like a medium in a trance. In his television play *…but the clouds…*, written in 1977, a man called M used to "beg" a lost woman to appear in his "sanctum": "Then crouching there, in my little sanctum, in the dark, where none could see me, I began to beg, of her, to appear, to me. Such had long been my use and wont. No sound, a begging of the mind, to her, to appear, to me. Deep down into the dead of night, until I wearied, and ceased. Or of course until –" (420). Most often, "in the proportion say of nine hundred and ninety-nine to one, or nine hundred and ninety-eight to two," M's begging is in vain, but in some cases the woman does appear, and sometimes inaudibly quotes from William Butler Yeats's poem "The Tower" (written in 1925), as follows: "…clouds…but the clouds…of the sky…." Yeats is well-known to have been involved in séances, and even wrote a séance play called *The Words upon the Window-Pane.* In his poem "The Tower," Yeats evokes the dead. Beckett's allusion to "The Tower" reinforces the resemblance of the ritual in *…but the clouds…* to a séance conjuring up the woman's

spirit, with the appearance of her face involving a materialization of her spirit.

Beckett employs three kinds of camera shots in …*but the clouds…* : a near shot from behind, of M sitting on an invisible stool, bowed over an invisible table; a long shot of a circular, lit space that is either empty or occupied by a man called M 1; and a close-up of the woman's face. M in the near shot, wearing a light gray robe and a skullcap, is apparently M 1 having returned to his sanctum in the North. Enoch Brater argues, "M 1 effectively becomes M when he crouches in his so-called invisible sanctum […]." Brater asserts, "He is not alone after all. Unknown to him, the television camera has become an unseen voyeur, recording for the viewer a '*near shot from behind*'" (1987, 99; emphasis in the original).

Who, then, is watching M through the camera lens? The narration by V, the voice of M, precedes the pictures. V's lines issue from two different temporalities; as Brater points out, "Word and image represent two separate grammatical dimensions of time as delivered here: words speak in the past tense, pictures and stage directions in the more luminous present" (1987, 99). Whereas V narrates what he used to do in the past tense, saying, for example, "When I thought of her it was always night. I came in – " (Beckett, 419), he sometimes comments on the pictures in the present: "No, that is not right" (419), "Right" (419-22), and "Let us now distinguish three cases" (420). V also makes scenes repeat to confirm their details: "Let us now run through it again" (421). V is thus highly conscious of television technology and seems, in effect, to be directing the scenes of the play through the television camera lens as he comments on the pictures. By analogy, V is repeatedly reproducing the solitary séances of M, who is V's past self. Since the viewpoint of the camera is V's, it is not objective but 'subjective,' like the viewpoint in Beckett's *Film*. By sharing V's viewpoint, members of the television audience become involuntary sitters at the séance.

Yeats attached great importance to the dramatization and understanding of ghosts. In his play *Purgatory*, for example, he represented the idea of dreaming back not as an abstract concept but rather as a concrete image of the past and the dead. In book 3 of *A Vision*, he explains, "In the *Dreaming back*, the *Spirit* is compelled to live over and over again the events that had most moved it" (1992, 226; emphasis in the original). Through the dreaming back of the crucial scenes of a lifetime, the gaps between the dead and the living, and the past and the present, are eliminated. V's repeated attempts to reproduce M's ritual in

...but the clouds... may thus be viewed as a dreaming back to see the crucial moment of the woman's appearance. V's description of the woman, "With those unseeing eyes I so begged *when alive* to look at me" (420; emphasis added) implies that either the woman or V is dead, or that both are dead. Beckett may be quoting from "The Tower," a poem to evoke the dead, in order to signal this. Yet if *...but the clouds...* was conceived under the considerable influence of Yeats, why was it written not for stage but for television?

"The Tower" is closely related to Yeats's book on occult philosophy, *A Vision*, in which he uses the word 'phantasmagoria' in discussing the "dreaming back" by the Spirit. The phantasmagoria was originally a show projected by an improved version of the magic lantern, which cast artificial images of ghosts for frightened audiences in a dark room. Yeats regarded the projection of phantasmagoria as a technique for visualizing the images of spirits. I would suggest that *...but the clouds...* is Beckett's television version of Yeats's phantasmagoria. In *...but the clouds...*, Beckett transmuted the everyday medium of television into another medium: a spiritual one.

2. The Occult and Optical Technology

Optical technology used to be closely related to séances. In the 1870s, the famous English medium Florence Cook materialized the spirit of Katie King by employing a device similar to a camera obscura, the name of which derives from 'small, dark room' in Latin. The camera obscura is a primitive optical apparatus that projects upside-down images through a pinhole into a dark chamber. The notion of the camera obscura adds a new dimension to Beckett's description of his television works as "peephole art" (qtd. in Ben-Zvi, 208). V's efforts can be seen as an updating of the camera obscura technique, in that he projects an image of the dead woman through the 'peephole' of the television camera into the darkness. In a letter to the students of a California school written in 1923, Yeats says, "we shall be able to see it [Ireland in all its tragedy and ruin] all separated from our own fears and hopes, as if upon the luminous table of a *camera obscura*" (1986; emphasis added).

His deep interest in optical technologies notwithstanding, Yeats thought that in most cases materialized spirits called forth in séances were "mere images." In "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolate Places," which was written in 1914 and first appeared in Lady Gregory's *Visions and Beliefs in the West of Ireland* (1920), Yeats names two people "who first adapted to the séance room the philosophy of

Swedenborg" (1994, 57): a Frenchman named Allan Kardec – the pseudonym of Hippolyte Rivail (1804-1869) – and the American spiritualist Andrew Jackson Davis (1826-1910). Yeats maintains that it was mere images with which Kardec and Davis spoke in the séance room, the spirit itself being far away. Yeats compares the séance room to "a photographer's room": "The images are made of a substance drawn from the medium who loses weight, and in a less degree from all present, and for this light must be extinguished or dimmed or shaded with red *as in a photographer's room*" (1994, 61; emphasis added). This echoes an analogy, suggested by Tom Gunning, between a medium's ectoplasm, which "may be merely an image," and a camera: "The medium herself became a sort of camera, her spiritual negativity bodying forth a positive image, as the body behaves like an uncanny photomat, dispensing images from its orifices" (Gunning, 58).

Yeats saw the magical power of the soul in spirit photographs. Spirit photographs began with accidental double exposure with the reuse of poorly cleaned plates, but, in the 1850s, a few photographers started to create them deliberately by exploiting "the resemblance between the effects of photographic superimposition and the ghostly imagery inherent in the collective imagination of the time" (Chéroux, 46).The famous spirit photograph of Yeats with a spirit is believed to have been made in the late 1920s.[1] Beckett's notion of television as "peephole art," permitting viewers to "see what was never meant to be seen" (qtd. in Ben-Zvi, 208), applies to spirit photographs as well in that unexpected images of ghosts appear in them. The striking images of the mouth in *Not I* and the head in *That Time* bear some resemblance to the floating heads in spirit photographs.

Optical technologies have often been used as 'magic' to project the 'inner light' or images of spirits. A great influence on the occult revivalists of the nineteenth century, Éliphas Lévi – the pseudonym of Alphonse-Louis Constant (1810-1875) – explains that "the images of persons and things are preserved in the Astral Light. Therein also can be evoked the forms of those who are in our world no longer, and by this means are accomplished those mysteries of Necromancy which are so contested and at the same time so real" (119); Lévi, who was known as a 'Magus,' describes "the astral fluid" as "a latent light" (67). It is worth mentioning that Yeats relates Lévi's astral light to the daguerreotype, an early type of photograph produced through a process invented by Louis J. M. Daguerre and Joseph Nicéphore Niépce in 1839:

> The name 'Astral Light' was given to this air or spirit [Spiritus Mundi] by the Abbé Constant who wrote under the pseudonym of Éliphas Lévi and like Madame Blavatsky, claimed to be the voice of an ancient magical society. In his *Dogma et rituel de l'haute magie* [*Dogme et rituel de la haute magie*] published in the fifties, he described in vague, eloquent words, influenced perhaps by the recent discovery of the daguerreotype these pictures which we continually confuse with the still animate shades.
>
> <div align="right">(Yeats 1994, 271; punctuation as in the original)</div>

Yeats relates the connection he draws between the occult and technology to, as it were, Swedenborg's version of the dreaming back, adding, "A more clear exposition of a perhaps always incomprehensible idea is that of Swedenborg who says that when we die, we live over again the events that lie in all their minute detail in our memory" (1994, 271-72). In these statements, Yeats's interest in technology as a means of visualizing apparitions is clear. It is no wonder that he specifically connects the optical technology of the phantasmagoria with dreaming back and the séance.

'Phantasmagoria,' a term that appears in his discussion of the dreaming back of the Spirit in book 3 of *A Vision*, is a keyword in Yeats's writings on séances and dreaming back; the origins of the term merit consideration here. The phantasmagoria was "an exhibition of optical illusions produced chiefly by means of the magic lantern" (*OED* online), which was invented by Étienne-Gaspard Robert (later called Robertson, 1763-1837) to visualize ghosts by projecting images of the dead on a smoke screen; subjects such as Robespierre, Danton, and other figures of the French Revolution were evoked to capture the attention of fearful audiences. The phantasmagoria was introduced to England in late 1801 or early 1802 by a French showman named Paul de Philipstal, where it became an immediate hit. In his 'phantasmagoria,' "the figures were made to rapidly increase and decrease in size, to advance and retreat, dissolve, vanish, and pass into each other" (*OED* online) in the dark room in which they were projected.

In "Swedenborg, Mediums, and the Desolated Place," Yeats describes the séance as "histrionic or a hollow show" and regards the sitters at séances as "spectators of a phantasmagoria" (1994, 62). Here Yeats apparently employs the word 'phantasmagoria' specifically to refer to the optical ghost show.[2] This applies as well to his use of the word in explaining his theory of the spirit in *A Vision*.

3. Seeing the Internalized Ghosts Without

Robert Langbaum observes that "Yeats equates art and ghost-making" (172), and furthermore offers the significant insight that "Yeats feels his imagination to be the vehicle for another's memory" (173). In this view, our unconscious life is external, in that the dead are working out their destinies through us; our spontaneous thoughts are not really our own. Langbaum argues that Yeats changes "the whole geography of self and not-self that has shaped the European sense of identity at least since Descartes' time" (173).

This Yeatsian notion of self and not-self must have been attractive to Beckett, whose protagonists often hear their unconscious thoughts uttered by their own voices but flowing from without. In this sense, the voices of such characters are like those of mediums in conveying their own "unconscious life," which haunts them.

Terry Castle's argument on phantasmagoria and photography is provocative in this regard. Castle raises a cogent, but itself uncanny, question about a spirit photograph from the 1860s taken by Édouard Buguet that shows "the diaphanous form of a young woman floating obliquely over the head of a young man deep in contemplation":

> Is she "inside" his head? The image is truly phantasmagorical –
> and not only in the sense that the camera, like a magic lantern, has
> realized the phantom-woman in a curiously literal way. From one
> perspective this carefully staged double exposure (if that is what it
> is) is a kind of self-reflexive commentary on the uncanny nature of
> photography, the ultimate ghost-producing technology of the nine-
> teenth century. But the image is phantasmagorical in another
> sense, in that it is also a representation of reverie itself – a fantas-
> tically exalted picture of what one "senses" when one thinks. […]
> it also evokes something unmistakably familiar – something both
> inside and outside, real and unreal, the luminous figure of thought
> itself.
>
> (167)

The ambivalence of phantasmagorical thought that Castle describes explains well the idea that our unconscious life is external. In this context, an earlier reference Castle makes to Yeats's "mind's eye" is very reasonable: "one might believe ghosts to be illusion, present 'in the

mind's eye' alone, but one experienced them here as real entities, existing outside the boundary of the psyche. The overall effect was unsettling – like seeing a real ghost" (159-60).

Castle relates the phantasmagoria to the larger problem of demystification in post-Enlightenment Western culture, shedding light on attempts by scientists and philosophers of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries "to do away with the old theological world of apparitions and [give] voice to a new and explicitly psychological theory of supernatural phenomena" (161), which, in her view, was peculiarly compromised from the start. She asserts that ghosts were not exorcized but only internalized and reinterpreted as hallucinatory thoughts through such demystification. The relocation of the world of ghosts to the imagination supernaturalized the mind itself. Consequently, the boundary between ghost-seeing and ordinary thought was subverted. If ghosts were the artificial product of a certain internal mechanical process, then as Castle puts it, "the magic lantern was the obvious mechanical analogue of the human brain, in that it 'made' illusory forms and projected them outward" (164). This inevitably led to the paradox, also evident in the real phantasmagoria, that "ghosts did not exist, but one saw them anyway" (165). Hence, "one was likely to experience one's own thoughts in an uncanny, involuntary, oddly embodied way as a kind of bizarre, alienating spectacle imposed from without" (166) like "a spectre-show of unaccountable origin" (167). When Yeats, like a medium, conjured up the dead in "The Tower," he might have 'seen' the phantasmagorical ghosts in his mind's eye.

In *...but the clouds...*, V reports that the woman fails to appear "in the proportion say of nine hundred and ninety-nine to one, or nine hundred and ninety-eight to two" (421) when he begs her to do so. At the same time, he cannot rid himself of the suspicion that her appearances, when they do occur, are merely his own reveries. This is why he has to rephrase "When I thought of her" as "When she appeared" (419). V cannot distinguish his own imaginative creation from what he really saw.

M, the past self of V, was in effect projecting his inner image of the deceased woman outward from the camera obscura of his imagination into the small, dark chamber of the sanctum; in the present, V tries to project this inner image using the contemporary optical technology of television to 'see' her without. V hopes that, through repetitions like those of the 'dreaming back,' the moment may come when he feels her appearance to be real, perhaps because the repetitions will have made

him so "wearied" – as he used to feel in his sanctum at the "dead of night" (420) – that he loses control of reason and consciousness and enters a dream-like state.

Yeats draws an analogy between a "separated spirit," or "phantom," and a "dream of the night" in the context of the phantasmagoria in *A Vision*'s book 3, "The Soul in Judgement" (1992, 221). He describes the phantasmagoric materializations as "those finely articulated scenes and patterns that come out of the dark, seemingly completed in the winking of an eye, as we are lying half asleep" and, moreover, as "all those elaborate images that drift in moments of inspiration or evocation before the mind's eye" (1959, 350). The reason that V must serve as his own (M's) voyeur lies in the woman's appearance only when he (M) was in a dream-like state, and in V's desire to confirm that her appearance really occurred. Tellingly, however, V must himself be exhausted to be free of the control of his own consciousness.

Here the echo of another Yeats play can be discerned (a play strongly influenced by the ghostly Noh theatre), *At the Hawk's Well* (1917), wherein miraculous water flows from an ever-dry well only when the characters Old Man and Cuchulain are tempted to sleep by the dance of the hawk, the guardian of the well. Cuchulain says to Old Man, "Then Speak to Me" (1934, 211) in response to the Old Man's question to the Musicians, "Why don't you speak to me?" V, in *...but the clouds...*, similarly says, "Speak to me" (421), when the woman appears and her lips move with her inaudible quote from "The Tower." As Brater points out, Yeats's séance play, *The Words upon the Window-Pane*, is also echoed in this regard: "Dr. Trench: I thought she was speaking. / Mrs. Mallet: I saw her lips move" (Yeats 1934, 611-12; qtd. in Brater 1987, 102).[3] Beckett's quotation from Yeats's poem in the séance-like television play *... but the clouds...* resonates thus as a reference to the Yeatsian phantasmagoria.

In *...but the clouds...*, V longs earnestly and sincerely for the image of the lost woman to appear from without, or at least, V longs to 'see' her without. In the past, M repeated, and now V continues to repeat, his expression of this longing as itself a ray of hope. The image of the woman in *...but the clouds...* may be no more than a hallucination arising in the mind of M/V. At the end of the play, however, her face appears without V's evocation. Does she really appear to V? We know that the image is artificial, being created with television technology, but we cannot help feeling that this moment of the dead night's dream is beautiful.

As Beckett's version of the Yeatsian phantasmagoria, *...but the clouds...* could only have been written for television. As the magic lantern was for Yeats, television was for Beckett a device for projecting the inner ghost outward. Beckett did not put his trust in the real eye. Television was the optical tool upon which he relied to visualize the inner vision and to 'see' it with his mind's eye.

Notes

1.   See 'Notes' in *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats Vol. V. Later Essays*, ed. by O'Donnell. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1994, 302, n.81, 355, n.35d.

2.   It is not certain that Yeats saw a phantasmagoria himself, but it is reported that he saw a "patriotic lantern show" in a window of the National Club, in which a mock funeral organized by Connolly appeared ("End-matter: Biographical and Historical Appendix" in *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*). Yeats was certainly interested in lantern slides. In the letter to Lady Gregory dated 19 March 1918, Yeats wrote, "I spent £7 on lantern slides in London, really beautiful slides. I think that even my best speaking will be less popular than they will be" (*The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*). He also wrote, in a letter to Edward Gordon Craig dated 16 October 1910, "I have a growing desire to add lantern slides of Craig scenes. [...] For years I have been attacking the stage scene of commerce but have only been able to explain in words what should take its place" (*The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats*).

3.   Brater also mentions Horatio's "Speak to me" in Act 1, Scene 2 of *Hamlet*, and "Speak to me" in T. S. Eliot's "A Game of Chess" in *The Waste Land* (1987, 101, and 2004, 38).

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"IMAGINATION, EAR AND EYE" ET
"MÜDES VOGELGESTÖHN":
une réflexion sur la musique et l'influence du poème
"The Tower" dans …*nur noch Gewölk…*, *Geistertrio* et
Nacht und Träume

Schirin Nowrousian

A poem, three television plays closely connected to this poem, tension between music and words, sleepy birds and people who are not less so, an unpublished manuscript stanza, and three unique witches: such are the topics of this article.

"The Tower," source des trois pièces télévisuelles de Beckett

Le SDR (Süddeutscher Rundfunk) a diffusé *Geistertrio*,...*nur noch Gewölk...* et *Not I* de Beckett à la télévision allemande le 1ᵉʳ novembre 1977.[1] *Nacht und Träume* a été écrit, produit et diffusé en 1982-83, et cette version filmée du SDR reste la seule de la pièce. Lors de visites que j'ai faites aux archives du SWR (Südwestrundfunk), l'ancien SDR, à Stuttgart, j'ai pu faire une découverte qui justifie que l'on s'y attarde.

La visualisation et l'écoute attentives de …*nur noch Gewölk...* ont révélé qu'un passage s'y trouve prononcé dont il n'y a nulle trace dans le texte publié, ni en anglais (Faber), ni en français (Minuit), ni en allemand (Suhrkamp). L'affaire est curieuse...

Avertissement est donné aux lecteurs de ...*que nuages...* (Minuit) que le poème "The Tower" de W. B. Yeats y joue un certain rôle. Curieusement, la traductrice Edith Fournier renseigne le lecteur sur le fait que "Samuel Beckett évoque plus particulièrement les sept derniers vers de ce poème et cite les quatre derniers" (Beckett 1992, 38). Elle donne également à lire la traduction du passage en question, sans indiquer la source de cette traduction. J'imagine donc pour l'instant que la traduction est de sa propre plume. La BBC avait réalisé la même année (le 17 avril 1977) sa version de ...*but the clouds...*. Il se peut que dans cette version, seuls les quatre vers mentionnés soient utilisés (mais pour ma part, cela reste à vérifier). C'est aussi le cas de la version anglaise officielle, ainsi que de la version publiée en allemand, car Suhrkamp

n'a – à ma connaissance – jamais publié la version intégrale de ce que l'on entend vraiment dans la pièce "allemande": les quinze derniers vers, soit toute la dernière strophe du poème.

La remarque d'Edith Fournier sur l' "évocation" faite par Beckett est contestable. Car Beckett n''évoque' pas le poème de Yeats (à moins qu'on considère que tout procédé consistant à intégrer une source dans une œuvre est 'évocateur'); l'usage qu'il fait de cette 'source,' usage qui excède largement l' 'évocation,' ne se limite pas, loin de là, à ses sept derniers vers, il concerne tout un ensemble d'énoncés du poème, pour ne pas dire qu'il se réfère à son thème principal et qu'il l'utilise dans son intégralité. Et il le transforme en un genre qui est éloigné du poème: oui, d'une certaine manière – et je le dis avec une grande prudence – il l''adapte.' Pour en faire quoi? Trois pièces de télévision…

Ceci implique en premier lieu une remise en question de la pratique de l'adaptation. Qu'une œuvre s'inspire d'une autre ou connaisse des références en coulisse auxquelles elle fait subtilement allusion, il s'agit là d'une pratique bien connue. Les œuvres de Beckett ne font pas exception à un tel 'fonctionnement' de l'imaginaire. Mais peut-être quelque chose d'un autre ordre se joue-t-il ici. Quelque chose qui mérite que l'on s'y arrête et qu'on y regarde de plus près. La sévérité de Beckett envers des demandes qui lui ont été faites d'adapter ses œuvres pour les transposer dans d'autres genres est bien connue. Le livre de Clas Zilliacus commence par la citation d'une célèbre lettre de Beckett de 1957 dans laquelle il interdit l'adaptation de *Act without Words* au cinéma en disant avec l'once d'ironie qu'on lui connaît bien: "If we can't keep our genres more or less distinct, or extricate them from the confusion that has them where they are, we might as well go home and lie down" (Si nous sommes incapables de maintenir une distinction entre les genres ou de les soustraire à la confusion qui les tient embrouillés, alors autant rentrer chez soi se coucher; je traduis).

Et ici? On a affaire à ce phénomène rare: le texte 'adapté' n'est pas matérialisé par un support écrit, sa 'matérialisation' est radiophonique et donc exclusivement orale – et de surcroît en allemand. Il s'agit donc nécessairement d'un passage traduit. La seule trace écrite que j'aie pu trouver pour l'instant de cette strophe – et donc de la décision de Beckett de l'utiliser – est celle, manuscrite, qui figure à côté d'autres modifications sur l'une des trois versions du cahier de production de *...nur noch Gewölk...*, la "version finale," à en croire l'inscription "letzte Fassung" en page de couverture. Il s'agit d'une photocopie, datée du 13 juin 1977 (1977a). La "deuxième version" de ce dossier est

identique à la "version finale," mais ne comporte pas les modifications faites à la main (1977b), et elle apporte une autre information très intéressante (j'y reviendrai). La "troisième version" n'apporte rien de nouveau par rapport aux deux premières.

En comparant l'écriture de Beckett dans ses lettres et petites cartes manuscrites à celle des modifications du texte, je suis arrivée à la conclusion qu'il s'agissait très probablement dans la "version finale" de sa propre écriture. Mon hypothèse a été confirmée par Erika Tophoven, la co-traductrice de *...nur noch Gewölk...*. Retenons surtout que les autres modifications inscrites à la main par Beckett ont toutes été intégrées dans la version publiée par Suhrkamp. L'ajout de la dernière strophe a-t-il été fait si tardivement qu'il n'était plus possible de l'intégrer dans la version finale publiée et qu'il est ainsi tombé dans l'oubli jusqu'à aujourd'hui? Ou Beckett souhaitait-il qu'il n'y figure pas? La première hypothèse me semble la plus probable, à moins que l'auteur ait voulu garder un texte 'identique' dans toutes les versions imprimées.

Ma thèse élargie est la suivante: ce poème de Yeats est le moteur secret de la genèse d'images, de sons, et de musique qui informe ces trois pièces.

J'ai utilisé les mots 'adaptation' et 'citation.' Fournier parle elle aussi de citation. Il est en effet évident que Beckett cite Yeats. La version anglaise de Faber n'indique pourtant rien au lecteur. À lui d'aborder seul le texte. Il en est de même pour la traduction allemande. Aucune mention de Yeats n'est faite au lecteur de ces éditions. Et encore moins au spectateur de la version filmée. L'intégration est totale et la citation entièrement 'camouflée.' On croit lire (entendre) une parole de Beckett lui-même. Et ce qui est surprenant c'est qu'elle puisse parfaitement passer pour une parole de Beckett. Pour parler d'une manière un peu provocante, elle semble même être plus beckettienne que Beckett.

Le protagoniste de *...nur noch Gewölk...* prononce des paroles remarquables, des paroles qui nous 'pénètrent.' Paroles d'une sombre tonalité. Sa voix citant la dernière strophe de Yeats parle de la mort des amis, de la mort de tout œil étincelant qui jadis nous avait coupé le souffle, elle nous parle d'un déclin, d'un effacement progressif vers un lieu où elle ne sera plus en effet, puisque c'est la fin de la pièce – la fin aussi du poème. La fin du poème devient fin de la pièce. Elle sert également en quelque sorte de pivot final aux deux autres pièces: *Geistertrio* et *Nacht und Träume*. La pièce nous parle donc de quelqu'un qui

s'apprête à finir, on pourrait presque dire à 'en finir' – de quelqu'un qui prépare son départ.

Si l'on voulait parler d'adaptation, il faudrait donc donner au mot un sens très particulier. Il ne s'agit évidemment pas d'un 'mot à mot,' ou d'une suite donnée à 'l'histoire' du poème de Yeats qui parle de cette femme "commended by a song" ("que célébrait une chanson") ou de l'homme "drowned in the great bog of Cloone" ("qui se noya dans le grand marais de Cloone" 1990, 220; 2002, 199). Rien de tout cela. Et pourtant cette 'adaptation' si particulière couvre l'ensemble de ces trois pièces pour la télévision, c'est elle qui donne au fond à la vieillesse ou au déclin cette tonalité tendue, qui leur confère cette douceur amère ou cette amertume douce si étranges qui les portent, encore vivants, jusqu'au seuil d'une sorte de 'finalement' dont la mention, dont la profération vocale est l'ultime manifestation avant que ce 'final' rencontre son destin: une fin complète, un arrêt.

Le long poème de Yeats commence par cette phrase remarquable:

What shall I do with this absurdity
O heart, O troubled heart – this caricature,
Decrepit age that has been tied to me
As to a dog's tail?

Que ferai-je de cette absurdité
Ô cœur, ô cœur troublé – de cette caricature
De cette décrépitude qui s'est attachée à moi
Comme à la queue d'un chien?

Beckett, lui, savait quoi en faire. Ce qu'il met en scène c'est ce que perçoit la conscience d'un homme âgé, se souvenant, mais parvenu au seuil de la 'faillite' de la mémoire. Cela non pas pour opposer une conscience âgée qu'une conscience jeune serait inapte à appréhender, mais plutôt pour proposer le spectacle d'une conscience hors du temps, hors de tout vécu pur et simple.

Mon titre comprend une citation en anglais du poème de Yeats: "imagination, ear and eye." Ces trois mots reviennent à plusieurs reprises à commencer par les vers faisant suite à la question du début:

Never had I more
Excited, passionate, fantastical
Imagination, nor an ear and eye

That more expected the impossible –

Jamais je n'ai eu
L'imagination plus vive, plus passionnée plus
Fantasque, l'œil et l'oreille plus disposés
À espérer l'impossible –

Se poursuivant sur un ton de regret, le poète se croit contraint d'abandonner la poésie pour la pensée abstraite "Until imagination, ear and eye, / Can be content with argument and deal / In abstract things [...]" (jusqu'à ce qu'imagination, œil et oreille / Se satisfassent de disputes savantes et traitent / De choses abstraites [...].) Par la suite, le mot 'imagination' réapparaît dans une phrase qui pourrait donner à *...nur noch Gewölk...* son contenu, sous la forme d'une question: "Does the imagination dwell the most / Upon a woman won or a woman lost?" ("L'imagination ressasse-t-elle davantage le souvenir d'une bien-aimée ou d'une femme perdue?" 1990, 222; 2002, 198). Cette question rappelle une phrase de *Words and Music* où Paroles disait, "*essayant de chanter, doucement, accompagné doucement de Musique*": "[...] She comes in the ashes / Who loved could not be won / Or won not loved" (" [...] Tu la vois venir / Dans les cendres qui aimée / Ne fut pas conquise / Ou conquise pas aimée"; 1984, 131; 1972, 72).

 L'homme de *...nur noch Gewölk...* distingue quatre sortes de moments dans les réminiscences qu'il relate: (1) les moments où il "la" voit (elle vient et disparaît aussitôt); (2) les moments où il la voit et où elle reste un peu; (3) les moments où il la voit et où elle reste: il la supplie alors de lui parler ("Sprich zu mir") (1996a, 39), et elle lui parle, mais les mots qu'elle prononce ne se lisent que sur ses lèvres, l'homme devant leur donner (sa) voix; (4) les moments où elle ne vient pas du tout. Ce cas est "de loin le plus fréquent" (1992, 47). L'homme dit ceci: "Verweilte. [...] Mit jenen nicht sehenden Augen, die ich im Leben so anflehte mich anzuschauen" ("s'attardait. […] Avec ce regard perdu que, vivant, je suppliais tant de se poser sur moi"; 1996a, 38; 1992, 45). On entendra bien: "vivant," c'est-à-dire, de son vivant.

 Cet être qui s'adresse à nous d'au-delà de la mort renvoie aux vers du poème de Yeats où il parle de "being dead" dans un sens bien particulier: "being dead, we rise / Dream and so create / Translunar Paradise" ("morts, nous ressuscitons / Rêvons et créons ainsi / Le Paradis translunaire" 1990, 223; 2002, 199). Il ne faut certainement pas entendre par "being dead" 'une fois que nous sommes morts,' mais quelque

chose comme 'nous sommes morts, déjà, depuis longtemps, depuis toujours, même si nous sommes également vivants, les deux mots ne sont que des inventions de l'être humain qui va et vient sans fin entre les deux.' Les deux 'côtés': mort et vie, vie et mort, passant l'un et l'autre par la naissance, la jeunesse, le grand âge, puis le déclin vers la fin: un seul et même 'côté,' en somme…

Dans l'interaction beckettienne entre poésie et pièce télévisuelle, le poème est la source directe de l'univers scénique. On sait à quel point et parfois avec quelle densité les textes de Beckett peuvent pratiquer la citation, directe ou indirecte, d'autres œuvres. Mais la particularité de ces trois pièces télévisuelles est qu'au niveau de l'image et du son (du non-musical et du musical, "imagination, ear and eye"), leurs trames profondes tissent la substance même du poème. Le poème fonctionne comme un scénario poétique informant en profondeur les trois projets; il est au vrai un donneur d'impulsion cachée, de cette forte impulsion qu'est l'impulsion du faible, de ce qui ne peut être cerné que faiblement.

Certes, Beckett ne convoque pas la "peasant girl commended by a song" ("fille de paysans que célébrait une chanson") du poème de Yeats (219; 197) en tant que telle: mais il met en scène un visage féminin, le messager annonçant la non-venue d'une femme, la main d'aspect plutôt féminin de *Nacht und Träume*. Et les deux instances du rêveur et du rêvé ne sont pas sans rappeler les vers du poème de Yeats, "All those things whereof / Man makes a superhuman / Mirror-resembling dream" ("Toutes ces choses / Dont l'homme se fait un rêve surhumain / Qui ressemble à un miroir"; 224; 200). De même, *Geistertrio* n'est que l'une des formes d'actualisation du "mirror-resembling dream": l'image prégnante est celle qui pour la première fois fait voir directement au spectateur le visage du personnage. Au moment où ce vieux personnage s'arrête devant le miroir, la caméra montre son visage qui emplit subitement toute l'image, tout l'écran. L'on perçoit alors une sorte de sourire (appelons cela ainsi), le sourire 'inapprochable' d'un homme qui semble venir de temps archaïques, presque en dehors des catégories de la vie et de la mort. C'est ainsi qu'on peut comprendre que l'homme de *Geistertrio* annonce celui de *...nur noch Gewölk...*. L'homme de *...nur noch Gewölk...*, disait Beckett – c'est la note intéressante qui figure sur la couverture de la deuxième version de production – est en effet "le même que l'homme de *Geistertrio* dans une autre situation (plus tardive)" (1977b).

Pour *Geistertrio*, le poème de Yeats est comme la matière secrète de "imagination, ear and eye," le tissu dont le trio de fantômes constitue l'esprit tordu auquel l'homme n'échappera jamais. D'une certaine manière, le titre fait programme, *Geistertrio* convoque sur scène 'trois fantômes': l'œil qui regarde l'intérieur de la scène; l'oreille qui écoute l'intérieur de la scène; l'imagination qui après avoir cru entendre le bruit annonciateur à l'intérieur de la scène regarde dans le vide du couloir ce presque-hors-scène ou un lien vers celui-ci.

Dans les trois pièces, Beckett utilise un procédé qu'on pourrait appeler un 'assemblage adaptatif' extrêmement complexe et subtil. Même si *Geistertrio* et *Nacht und Träume* s'inspirent aussi d'autres sources que du poème de Yeats (et là-dessus il ne peut y avoir aucun doute), il est pourtant clair que ce poème noue et traverse les trois pièces de sa force formidable comme un scénario caché qui en donnerait la tonalité.

"Music had driven their wits astray":[2] la tension entre mots, musique et images dans les trois pièces télévisuelles

Je ne peux pas ici m'engager dans une analyse approfondie de la musique et de la citation musicale.[3] Mais on peut retenir que s'agissant de *Geistertrio* et *Nacht und Träume*, il faudrait tenir compte du champ de tension entre les mots, la musique et l'image, tous trois tendant vers l'extinction. Ce n'est que dans cette tension que devient pleinement compréhensible ce qui hante Beckett quand il vient à la musique: Paroles et Musique sont alors des 'amis irréconciliables,' des 'ennemis inséparables.' Pour Beckett, ils le sont depuis longtemps.

Pour *Geistertrio*, Beckett choisit le deuxième mouvement, Largo, du Trio n° 4 Opus 70 de Beethoven, dit aussi *Geistertrio* – par allusion aux trois sorcières de *Macbeth* – et plus précisément l'interprétation qu'en donnent Daniel Barenboim, Pinchas Zukerman et Jacqueline du Pré.[4] Le titre du morceau devient le titre de la pièce. Pour *Nacht und Träume*, Beckett choisit un lied de Schubert qui donnera également son nom à la pièce.

Schématiquement, le rapport paroles et musique connaît quatre modes: (1) le mot prononcé mais sans chant; (2) le mot chanté; (3) un chantonnement sans mots distincts; (4) un son sans voix ni parole (ou devrait-on parler de mot sans paroles?) On peut les énumérer dans ce sens, mais tout autant dans l'autre sens. Dans ces trois pièces, Beckett fait entendre ces quatre modes. Dans *Nacht und Träume*, l'instrumental est complètement écarté. À sa place revient quelque chose qui est beaucoup plus près du *song* et par conséquent aussi de notre conflit entre

Paroles et Musique: la voix humaine chantonnante et chantante. Quelque chose d'étrange survient dans cette pièce: au lieu d'engager un chanteur professionnel ou d'utiliser un enregistrement déjà existant, Beckett choisit d'y faire entendre la voix d'un non-professionnel (Tischendorf). Cette voix se fait entendre en une sorte de 'vocalisation' ouverte (sur un son de he-e-e), puis sous les espèces d'un chant (d'une grande retenue).

Dans *Geistertrio*, au contraire, Beckett se sert d'une musique purement instrumentale, sans voix humaine mais en contraste aigu avec la voix sèche et féminine qui désigne et annonce le visuel. La voix féminine invite le spectateur à regarder de plus en plus près. Il est assez significatif que la voix prononce les mots "Einzige Spur von Leben, eine sitzende Gestalt" ("Seul signe de vie une silhouette assise" (1996b, 21); 1992, 24) juste avant le premier 'moment' de la musique. Nous sommes dans le moment du regard-de-plus-près qu'accompagne la musique. C'est seulement après la fin du mouvement du zoom et de la musique qu'on entend la voix: "Er wird nun meinen, er höre sie" (1996b, 22), avec *sie* renvoyant à la femme qu'il souhaite tant revoir et qui ne vient pas. "Il va maintenant croire qu'il entend la femme approcher," dit assez inexactement la traduction française (1992, 27, 29); en fait la phrase dit (je traduis): "maintenant il croira l'entendre." Quand cette phrase est prononcée pour la deuxième fois dans la version allemande, la situation est moins claire: qui ou qu'est-ce qu'il va croire entendre? Elle, la musique? Ou elle, celle qui ne vient jamais? Ou l'on replonge dans le monde de l'éveil des fantômes de Yeats. Et par conséquent dans *...nur noch Gewölk...* où 'elle' apparaît dans l'image…

Quant à la musique de Beethoven dans *Geistertrio* c'est ou bien une sorte de "Flehen [...] [ihm] zu erscheinen" ainsi que dans *...nur noch Gewölk...* (1996a, 37), "une supplication" et sans paroles qu'il lui adresse pour "qu'elle lui apparaisse" (je traduis); ou bien elle correspond exactement à l'inverse: à la tentative de s'occuper de la musique comme on s'occuperait de "racines cubiques" (1992, 47), soit de tout autres choses. Si elle peut se tenir dans cette incertitude c'est précisément parce qu'elle vient vers nous sans paroles.

La voix masculine de *...nur noch Gewölk...* emmène le spectateur dans des souvenirs dont la suite d'images vient attester l'exactitude. À la fin de cette pièce, l'image s'efface avec le son de la voix; mais un paysage sonore s'insinue dans l'esprit du spectateur-auditeur par lequel ce dernier est envoyé 'dehors,' dans les ombres alentour – paysage sonore d'oiseaux gémissants: "... but the clouds of the sky ... when the

horizon fades ... or a bird's sleepy cry ... among the deepening sha-des..." ("...que nuages passant dans le ciel... lorsque l'horizon pâlit... ou le cri d'un oiseau qui sommeille... parmi les ombres appesanties...").[5] Pour un auditeur de langue allemande, écoutant cette 'triple déclinaison du chant d'adieu' des trois pièces, la traduction "müdes Vogelgestöhn" (1996a, 40) prend une signification toute particulière. L'expression est frappante. *Gestöhn* est une vieille forme du terme *Stöhnen* (gémisse-ment), tout comme *Gewölk* du terme *Wolken* (nuages). Cela – il faut le dire très clairement – ne ressemble guère à l'original anglais. Il y a quelque chose d'extrêmement surprenant dans cette formule. Dans l'original anglais, aucun gémissement d'oiseau, mais un cri. Un seul. Celui, endormi, le "sleepy cry" d'un oiseau unique, ce qui en allemand donnerait quelque chose comme *schläfriger Ruf* ou *Schrei*. Si on pense à la version en allemand, on est d'autant plus sensible à l'originalité de la traduction retenue: est-il question de plusieurs oiseaux (et non d'un seul') qui gémiraient comme des humains, dans des ombres de plus en plus opaques? Ne serait-ce pas plutôt des êtres humains qui, comme des oiseaux, chantent et jouent de la musique dans l'obscurité, "tief hinein in die dunkelste Nacht" ("au plus profond du cœur de la nuit"; Beckett, 1996a, 37; 1992, 43)? Musique et langue ici comme un faible "gémis-sement" du côté des humains, avant que ne s'estompe tout, pour chacun d'entre nous…

J'ai pu obtenir grâce à Erika Tophoven quelques informations sur cette traduction qui m'intriguait tant. Beckett avait à un moment de-mandé à son mari, Elmar Tophoven, une toute nouvelle traduction du poème de Yeats dans son entier. Mme Tophoven n'a malheureusement pas pu me la transmettre, mais je garde l'espoir de pouvoir la lire un jour. Était-ce une traduction faite pour une bonne part par Beckett lui-même? Quoi qu'il en soit (et la genèse de cette traduction reste à éluci-der), il l'a approuvée et y a très probablement mis sa touche person-nelle, en discussion étroite avec son traducteur allemand.

Lorsqu'on entend la musique dans *Geistertrio*, les mots font si-lence. Les paroles interrompent la musique pour parler. Aucune musi-que n'accompagne les paroles de *…nur noch Gewölk…*. C'est seule-ment dans *Nacht und Träume* que les deux – paroles et musique – se retrouvent à nouveau, et peut-être est-ce dans cette pièce, oui peut-être, et non dans *Geistertrio*, qu'est tenue la promesse d'un rendez-vous. Ils s'étaient ratés dans *Words and Music* où Paroles était plein de réti-cence; ils se ratent encore dans *Geistertrio*; mais dans *Nacht und Träume* leur rapprochement est avéré lorsqu'une simple voix humaine,

que n'indispose pas le fait de chanter les seules paroles de la pièce (qui
proviennent d'ailleurs d'un poème) entonne le lied de Schubert. C'est
ainsi que doucement, sans recours à la parole non-chantée, et sans se
disputer, ils se retrouvent.

Ce lied chante le rêve du rêve qui revient: il le chante parce que la
fin approche toujours, et qu'avec elle augmente l'aspiration de
l'homme au retour et à l'actualisation du passé. *Nacht und Träume* est
la pièce dans laquelle paroles et musique, par l'intermédiaire d'un rêve,
s'unissent très brièvement, pour quelques secondes… avant que tout
s'éteigne. La voix choisie pour le chant devient le nouvel 'enregistre-
ment' de l'air souvenu et de ses paroles. C'est la manière très délicate
qu'a Beckett de s'incliner devant une problématique qui l'a hanté sa vie
durant. Les trois pièces sont trois manières d'attaquer encore une fois
ce nœud de conflit.

Notes

1.   Il s'agit du programme du Süddeutscher Rundfunk (SDR), intitulé *Sha-
des / Schatten* , diffusé le 1[er] nov. 1977, et comprenant les productions SDR de
Geistertrio et de...*nur noch Gewölk...*, mis en scène et réalisés par Beckett, et
une co-production de *Not I* de la BBC et des RM Productions Munich.

2.   "La musique avait égaré leurs esprits" (Yeats 1990, 220; 2002, 198).

3.   Au sujet de la musique dans *Nacht und Traüme* et *Geistertrio*, cf. Maier
(1996 et 2001-2002).

4.   A ce sujet, voir Beckett (1976); Müller-Freienfels; et Knowlson (783).

5.   Ce sont, bien entendu, les quatre derniers vers du poème de Yeats cités
dans la pièce de Beckett.

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"HINT OF JUGULAR AND CORDS":
Beckett and Modern Medicine

Ulrika Maude

Beckett's writing is informed by medical practices and beliefs. While the references to medicine are often explicit, they also manifest themselves in implicit ways. The late prose and TV works, in particular, are suggestive of medical imaging technologies, which digitise and replicate the body, reproducing it as code or pixellated image. These two-dimensional fragmented images that give the subject or physician an understanding of anatomy and physiology, also virtualise the body, suggesting, often in problematic ways, its rewritability. This article explores instances of this tension in Beckett's work.

Samuel Beckett's works demonstrate a fascination with medical conditions and terminology, as words such as "lamina," "larynx," "lassata," "laudanum," "laxative," "leukotrichia," "limen," "lochia," "locomotor ataxy" and "lumbago" all attest, to mention but a few of the hundreds of examples of medical terms that can be found in Beckett's writing (Ackerley and Fernandes). In fact, it would be hard to find instances of non-ailing characters in Beckett's work, and as we know from James Knowlson's biography and Beckett's own correspondence, especially with Thomas MacGreevy, Beckett had plenty of first-hand experience of illness and various medical procedures, having, for instance, suffered recurring cysts on his neck; problems with his feet; anxiety attacks and, in 1968, a series of X-rays and gruelling bronchoscopies for an abscess on the lung. Beckett's short story "Yellow," published in *More Pricks than Kicks*, is said to be based on an operation Beckett had at the Merrion Nursing home in December 1932 to lance a septic cyst on his neck. On the same occasion, he also had "the joint of a painful hammer toe removed" (Knowlson, 166). According to James Knowlson, Beckett "observed carefully what was happening to him in the hospital, paying meticulous attention to all the preparations for his operation. And, a couple of days after the operation, he jotted down notes on what he

remembered of his experiences and feelings about the occasion" (Knowlson, 167).

Beckett also makes a number of humorous references to various ailments in his work, most of them real, but a few of them fictional, as the list, say, of pathologies of the foot in *First Love* attests: "the corn, the cramp, the kibe, the bunion, the hammer toe, the nail ingrown, the fallen arch, the common blain, the club foot, duck foot, goose foot, pigeon foot, flat foot, trench foot and other curiosities" (1995, 33). The best-known disease Beckett invented is probably Miss Dew's "duck's disease," which figures in *Murphy*. The references to medicine in the late work, though often more implicit than explicit, persist. In *Company*, the character lying on his back in the dark feels the "thrust of the ground against his bones. All the way from calcaneum to bump of philogenitiveness" (1992, 42), which four pages later is referred to as the "occipital bump" (46). In his "Whoroscope Notebook," from the 1930s, Beckett also makes note of the fact that the human body is "equivalent in length to 200 000 tissue cells, or 2 million ordinary microbes," and that blood consists of "30 000 milliards of red globules & 50 milliards of white." The notebook also contains a one-line annotation that simply reads "the Roentgen hand," by which Beckett must have meant the photograph of Wilhelm Röntgen's wife's, Bertha's, hand, which is the first-known X-ray photograph of the human body, dating from 1896, and which was circulated in at least 1100 publications, to prove that X-rays did, indeed, exist. One can in other words argue, with some conviction, that Beckett had a medical imagination.

Beckett also demonstrates a fascination with medical history and ideas in his work, as his early text *Whoroscope* (1930) attests, with its reference to the brothers Boot, Dutch doctors working in London, and more importantly to William Harvey – "dear bloodswirling Harvey" – who in 1628 announced his theory of the circulation of blood, based on experimentation, comparative anatomy and calculation, and which caused great controversy in its time, as Beckett's own notes on Descartes's reactions make clear. As Hugh Culik argued in 1977, Beckett's art incorporates various "methods of knowing about the world," and the medical represents one of the many (85).

Beckett's late works are often suggestive of various medical technologies, in particular different imaging devices. Various visualising techniques, such as X-rays, scanners and probes of different kinds, not only collapse the distinction between the inside and the outside of the body – as well as "the public and the private; specialised knowledge

and popular fantasy; and scientific discourse, high art, and popular culture," as Lisa Cartwright maintains (107) – they also somewhat problematically reproduce often two-dimensional images of the body that transform or reduce the living organism into pixels, graphs and information code, suggesting the body's rewritability. The technologies used to map the body are increasingly "*digital* rather than *analog* […], such as the MRI image, and this means in turn that cultural concepts of the body have begun to reflect concepts of the digital" (Sturken and Cartwright, 301; emphasis in the original). The body, in other words, by being made perceptible through various medical imaging methods, is not only made more acute, it is also rewritten, made virtual and – what amounts to the same thing – curiously disembodied.

In a number of Beckett's works, the relationship between voice, character and place is difficult to determine, casting a problematic light on questions of agency. This theme is introduced early, at least as early as *The Unnamable*, which famously opens with the questions, "Where now? Who now? When now?" (1979, 267). A number of the later prose works also have an oddly 'framed' quality, as if they were taking place on a television or computer screen: "Say a body. Where none. No mind. Where none. That at least. A place. Where none. For the body. To be in. Move in" (1992, 101). The title of Beckett's final play, *What Where* (1983), also seems pertinent, and one could argue that at least since Beckett wrote his first radio play, *All That Fall*, in 1956 – another work with numerous medical references – he has had an interest in technology and its potential to create virtual bodies. This kind of idea of the virtual body, whose late-twentieth-century manifestation is the body transferred onto screens and various monitors, can be said to have its origins in medicine, for the urge to visualize the body has been a central aspiration of Western medicine for its entire duration, as the importance of the anatomy theatre, dissection and physiognomy attest (Sturken and Cartwright, 300). As Bojana Kunst notes, "with the discovery of X-rays [in 1895], there has been a radical change in the depiction and decoding of the human body […]: the body is no longer approached by the intimacy (or morbidity) of direct physical contact" (22). Numerical, graphical and pictorial evidence, which is now considered more dependable, objective and easy to transmit than data gathered by the bedside by physicians, has gained ground over palpation and other forms of physical examination (Reiser, 270). "The technical development of medical imaging [itself] began with the digitalisation and computerisation of traditional X-ray techniques," writes Sarah Kember (1995a,

100). CAT scans, for instance, developed in 1967 by Godfrey Houns-field, transmit "fine X-rays through the patient to produce detailed cross-sections, which are computer processed to create a three-dimensional picture whose shading depends on tissue density" (Porter, 610). MRI scans, in turn, were developed in the early 1980s. Using a magnetic field "30 000 times stronger than the earth's," they afford extraordinary accuracy and fine detail of soft tissue, and are also re-nowned for the aesthetic appeal of the images that they produce (Kem-ber 1995a, 100). The close relationship between medicine and aesthet-ics that we are familiar with from at least the Renaissance onwards, in other words, persists into postmodernity: The tactility of the conven-tional anatomy class has given way to "clean technological filters where the image of the body is created by means of computers and technology; and therefore transmuted into a dematerialised graph, ma-trix, shadow, combination of colours and stripes, hypertexts" (Kunst, 22). Furthermore, as Stanley Reiser claims, computers, with their "power through programs to array, compare and portray the signifi-cance of data, now [also provide] the interpretive function" (271). They analyse and often self-diagnose the virtual body of the patient, so that the entire process of diagnosis can occur in a virtual realm.

The manner in which these newer digital technologies differ from analogue ones is their promise of projecting full, three-dimensional computer images, rather than the flat two-dimensional fragments of early X-rays and other visualising devices such as electrocardiographs that seemed to reduce the body to a diagram. The development of digi-tal imaging, in turn, fuelled fantasies of virtual bodies in virtual envi-ronments, at their peak in the 1980s, and Beckett's work, always antici-patory, as several critics have observed, begins to investigate the poten-tial and significance of these environments: "The body again. Where none. The place again. Where none" (Beckett 1992, 101-02).

Nacht und Träume, written for Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1982 at the request of Reinhart Müller-Freienfels, who was the director of SDR at the time, presents us with a dreamer, A, and his dreamt self, B, in the upper-right-hand corner of the television screen.[1] The play, in other words, reproduces or doubles the dreamer's body, or what amounts to the same thing, turns it virtual. The play has no dialogue, but instead uses Schubert's lied, "Nacht und Träume." However, the sentimental effect of the lied and the play's subject matter is curiously lessened and even made ironic by the peculiar *mise en abyme* of virtuality, created by the enframed image on the TV screen, which itself sports a further em-

bedded image in the upper-right-hand corner of the monitor. In response to a query from Müller-Freienfels about whether the dreamer and his dreamt self could be played by different actors, Beckett responded, in a letter dated Paris, 5 August 1982, that "by all means 2 separate performers for the dreamer and his dreamt self. The more so as he may be supposed to dream himself somewhat other than he is."

The virtual, dreamt self is comforted and aided by a pair of disembodied hands, whose gender Beckett wanted to keep deliberately ambiguous. The left hand rests briefly on B's head; the right hand offers a cup to his lips and later wipes his brow, then rests on B's palm. After fadeout the dream is repeated, but this time "in close-up and slower motion" (Beckett 1990, 446), as if to emphasise the dreamt, virtual self, and also foreground the medium Beckett is using by employing television's stock signifying devices, close-ups and slow motion. The prominent use of close-ups deprives the viewer of setting and context, and the soft focus in which the scene is shot smoothes out details and distances the image as if to further stress the virtual nature of the scene at hand (see Monaco, 198). The foregrounded virtuality in this play seems to entail a release from physical discomfort and suffering, a thought entertained by a number of Beckett's works, though not without a sense of irony. As Enoch Brater has observed, it seems as if the "visualization" of the images in *Nacht und Träume*, rather than "their meaning, were the dramatist's true subject" (1985, 50-51).

The play that seems most pertinent, however, for a study of virtuality, is *What Where*, and especially the two TV versions, *Was Wo*, which Beckett directed at Süddeutscher Rundfunk in 1985; and the Global Village production, which dates from 1987, and for which Beckett acted as an advisor to the directors, Stan Gontarski and John Reilly. Although originally written for the stage, Beckett came to the conclusion, in his own words (as recorded in *Waiting for Beckett*) that "*What Where* was written for the theatre, but it's much more a television play than a theatre play." Beckett was famously unhappy with the stage version, which presented problems of costume, makeup, lighting and the like, all well-documented by Knowlson, Cohn and others. "Prior to arrival in Stuttgart, Beckett cut about a quarter of the German text of *Was Wo* […]. Visually, he substituted masklike faces for the full-length grey figures. For exits and entrances of Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom, he substituted fadeouts and fadeups" (Cohn, 378-79). As Beckett himself put it in his production notebook for *Was Wo*, "Bodies & movement eliminated" (1999, 425). In preparation of his trip to Süd-

deutscher Rundfunk, Beckett wrote to Müller-Freienfels, in a letter dated Paris, 13 March 1984, that

> Perhaps the clue to the whole affair is its ghostliness. The 4 are indistinguishable. Ghostly garments, ghostly speech. This should be supplied by a single & invisible speaker, either live in conjunction with the 'action,' or for part-synchronisation. Bam's voice from beyond to be distinguished from the others by some form of microphonic distortion. The players would speak their words, but inaudibly.

In another letter, written in German to Müller-Freienfels and dated Paris, 5 March 1984, Beckett mentions that Bam's voice belongs to a "noch nicht gewordenen Jenseits" (a not yet evolved world beyond; editor's translation).

The TV play consists of four heads that are supposed to be "indistinguishable" from one another. In his production notebook for *Was Wo*, Beckett specifies: "Dim light. Faces blurred" (1999, 428), adding, "Only oval of face to be seen" (429). In the TV versions, especially the Global Village production, the effect of likeness between the four figures is increased by making the images of Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom appear as if they had been morphed, a process that "makes it difficult to distinguish between one person and another, thus collapsing the boundaries between bodies that were once considered inviolable" (Sturken and Cartwright, 304).[2] One of the characteristics of "the increased use of digital imaging [is to make] bodies appear mutable and plastic, easily combined and reassembled" (Sturken and Cartwright, 304).[3] Morphing, in addition, deprives the subject of a personal and social history, which virtual beings lack.

Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom appear to operate through a set of permutations that resemble a computer language. As Enoch Brater has argued, "a variety of elements, some lexical, some seasonal, and some more strictly choreographic, contribute to the formulation of a sustained pattern of repetition and recognition. On this set all directions end in mathematical symmetry" (1987, 153). To add to the machinelike quality of the play, V, represented by Bam's death mask, keeps switching off and back on again when a glitch in the system appears, "aborting the re-enactment if […] the words or actions are not correct" (Lyons, 95). The permutations, in turn, bring to mind computer loops: Bam, Bem, Bim and Bom seem condemned to perform the same set of

moves, as if caught in a set of looping instructions. "Are you free?" Bam asks Bim and later Bem (1990, 273, 275). The design, however, "serves no purpose, gratifies no desire; it is simply obedience to a compulsion," as if the players were losing species (Albright, 69).

Certain programming languages, such as Pascal and FORTRAN. which figure loop structures for repetition, only have one mood, the imperative (Kenner, 100). This is also the mood of *What Where*, in which each character in turn is compelled by V to act as interrogator and victim. In directing *Was Wo*, Beckett wanted to make certain Bam was clearly set apart from Bim, Bem and Bom and that his voice should be, and I repeat, "distinguished from the others by some form of microphonic distortion" (Beckett, 1984b). Beckett wanted Bam's voice to be "distant" and to have a "flat tone": "S [Stimme (voice)] recorded separately. then playback" (1999, 443). "In the final version of *Was Wo* worked out with cameraman Jim Lewis, 'V' [represented by Bam's death mask] [takes] up almost one-third of the video screen," as Gontarski points out (Beckett 1999, 453).

As is now widely acknowledged, modern surveillance culture has close institutional links with medical culture:

> The development of imaging technology in the detection and prevention of crime is historically and institutionally related to the development of imaging technology in the detection and prevention of disease. The technology in both institutions developed along the panoptic principle of surveillance and control, and now incorporates both photo-mechanical and computer imaging.
>
> (Kember 1995b, 117)

The most obvious and often-cited example is precisely Jeremy Bentham's panopticon, which, as Sarah Kember has argued, was but the "epitome of a disciplinary practice already carried out across a range of institutions including schools, prisons and hospitals" (1995b, 96). In *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault describes the functioning of the panopticon in the following manner: "All that is needed […] is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker or a schoolboy. By the effect of backlighting, one can observe from the tower, standing out precisely against the light, the small captive shadows in the cells of the periphery" (200).

Not only *What Where* but several of Beckett's prose pieces, too, seem to draw on the surveillance culture of modern medicine, staging bodies in various chambers being measured and observed in various postures: *Ping, Imagination Dead Imagine, All Strange Away*, even *Company*. A number of Beckett's works also stage a peculiar light and various rays. In *Play*, the three protagonists "must respond to the stimulus of a light-beam that turns their narrative on and off" (Kenner, 103). As if to emphasise their lack of agency, "the response to light is immediate" (Beckett 1990, 307). The unpublished "Long Observation of the Ray," in its various manuscript versions, which were written between October 1975 and November 1976, also seems to suggest a clinical scenario, in which "the only sound this faint sound as the shutter closes or opens again to reemit the ray," which again brings to mind an imaging device, scanner, or some such gadget.

The bodies in the late prose pieces and TV versions of *What Where* lack agency and seem to perform their permutations as on a computer loop. As Charles Lyons has argued, the "'itness,' 'whatness' and 'whereness' of these figures, who are almost interchangeable, does not exist" (Lyons, 96). They appear like case studies of virtuality, "poor binarised ghost[s]," the philosopher's dream (Lyotard, 17). *What Where* could even be considered the culmination of a theme Beckett has investigated from at least Murphy's rocking chair onwards. Sarah Kember has argued that "when medicine represents the body it represents its 'other'; the material object is sought by the rational subject" (Kember 1995b, 109). For all their promise of fullness and three-dimensionality, new medical devices, as any fantasies of virtuality, are curiously premised on erasing the body. Virtual "bodies are thin and never attain the thickness of flesh. The fantasy that says we can simultaneously have the powers and capacities of the technologizing medium without its ambiguous limitations, so thoroughly incorporated into ourselves that it becomes a living body, is a fantasy of desire" (Ihde, 15).

The fantasy of the body as virtual is premised on the idea of the body as code or information, which in turn has a long history, dating at least as far back as the Renaissance. A contemporary example is the Human Genome Project, which renders the "body as a kind of accessible digital map, something easily decipherable, understandable, and containable – a body that is seemingly less mysterious than the body that is popularly conceived and individually experienced" (Sturken and Cartwright, 301). The Human Genome Project consists of an idea of the body "transcribed into thousands of pages of code – line upon line of

letters of various orderings" (Sturken and Cartwright, 302). But as *What Where* attests, this kind of body, and the thinking or actions it might generate, are no longer human. I would like to draw to a close with a quote from Lyotard's essay, "Can Thought Go On without a Body?": "As a material ensemble, the human body hinders the separability of [its] intelligence, hinders its exile and therefore survival. But at the same time the body, our phenomenological, mortal, perceiving body is the only available *analogon* for thinking a certain complexity of thought" (Lyotard, 22).

The body with its various ailments and disorders is the locus of contingency in Beckett's oeuvre, which renders its status problematic, yet also nonnegotiable. Beckett's work both investigates and resists fantasies of disembodiment by offering us unattached hands, mouths and floating heads, fragmentation rather than wholeness. Beckett's last two TV projects can be read as case studies of virtuality – *Nacht und Träume*, perhaps focusing on the promise of comfort and release from suffering that disembodiment might entail, while *Was Wo* and its Global Village version offer us a glimpse of its horrors.

Notes

1.   I am indebted to Dr Jörg Hucklenbroich and Stephan Spering for their generous help and assistance at Südwestrundfunk.

2.   In actuality, the methods used were very simple. See Brater (1987, 161).

3.   For the English stage premier of the play, Beckett "suggested […] a hologram of the distorted face of Bam," as Stan Gontarski observes (Beckett 1999, 451).

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DANS LE FOR EXTÉRIEUR
DE LA BOÎTE CRÂNIENNE:
proses et pièces pour la télévision

Mireille Raynal-Zougari

In Beckett, text and image are never what they could have been. His experiments with media suggest an infinite chain of endless images and a regress of these very images toward the image that started it all. The world is formed in the skull. A Beckettian text reveals a mental coenaesthesis in which an infinity of points of view and objects and a space characterized by vast distances give rise to a virtuel universe. The Beckettian cranium presents the very conditions of representation, the adjustment of the apparatus before projection; it is an outer interiority, an enclosure bordering upon an opening.

En mars 1985, le journal *Libération* demanda à des écrivains célèbres pourquoi ils écrivaient. Beckett, on s'en souvient, transgressant les codes grammaticaux, répondit: "Bon qu'à ça." Effectivement, toujours tenté par la sauvagerie et l'altérité, l'auteur explora toutes les formes de "ça," des plus brutales aux plus sophistiquées, s'essayant à tous les genres, appréciant les plus hybrides, les plus ratés, les plus décalés, migrant tour à tour des "actes divers" aux "textes pour rien" ou aux "dramaticules," "mirlitonnades", ou autres "foirades."

Au moment où cette traversée infatigable lui semble peut-être mener à une impasse esthétique, métaphysique, ontologique et surtout langagière, la technologie télévisuelle pourrait offrir une solution. Comme Watt "sans courage pour prendre sur lui le poids d'une décision [...] il s'en remet à la froide machinerie d'une relation temps-espace" (1968, 22). Les contraintes techniques permettent de repenser à la base un rapport au temps et à l'espace et constituent par là même un nouvel instrument de sémiotisation, voire un modèle de l'écriture à venir. Les pièces pour la télévision sont en effet doublement originales: non seulement elles livrent une étrange visualité déroutante, en marge des attendus du code télévisuel mais, en plus, elles redéfinissent du même coup le rapport du spectateur au visible, de façon plus radicale encore

que le texte. La forme en effet ne cherche pas tant ici à rendre visible qu'à tout inventer en amont des angles de vision, qu'à nous inciter à adopter une posture de vision. Le champ de la caméra est peut-être le hors-champ de l'œuvre à venir.

Mise en boîte de choses inclassables

Beckett aime les lieux confinés, les réduits, cabanon, caverne, cagibi, "petit sanctuaire" du personnage de ...*que nuages*..., cage de Murphy. Ces sont des lieux oblitérés comme le regard fermé, mais pourtant actifs et affolés, des intérieurs qui incluent des extérieurs, des dedans qui ne sont que l'involution d'un dehors, des identités aliénées, des espaces *borderline*. Et même ce sont des objets-lieux, comme la chambre à six faces rêvée par l'Innommable, autrement dit la boîte, comme celle qui est présentée au début de *Pour finir encore*: "la boîte lieu dernier dans le noir le vide. Lieu des restes où jadis dans le noir de loin en loin luisait un reste" (9). "De loin en loin" révèle bien un espace de la coprésence sans continuité, sans frontières donc, puisque la frontière est en principe justement ce qui matérialise et marque la succession, ce qui la rend voyante. Dans la boîte, tout voisine sans se toucher, il n'est plus de seuil à franchir, les marques ne sont pas apparentes, comme de plus en plus dans l'écriture brisée, parataxique de Beckett. De fait, les pièces pour la télévision font 'luire' des restes. Elles rendent la partie à l'éclat d'une évidence en privilégiant le local – le reste – qui a une force expansive au sens où il devient un global, où il ne dépend plus d'un tout qui le subsumerait implicitement. Dans cette boîte qu'est la télévision, des choses se présentent déliées les unes des autres, et on remarque l'involution des corps ou leur fermeture, ou l'extraction d'une partie de ces corps. Par exemple, on trouve des mains coupées surgies du fond obscur dans *Nacht und Träume*, les visages sont suspendus dans *Quoi où*, le corps est recroquevillé dans *Nacht und Träume*, cette compacité dense ayant pour écho le halo de la scène au second plan et le trou lumineux de la fenêtre située à l'arrière au-dessus du corps. Ailleurs, la bouche est en gros plan dans *Pas moi*, ce qui constitue une effraction dans le visible et une transgression de la représentation anthropomorphique un peu à la façon d'Eisenstein – on ne peut guère se représenter un tout de ce corps. Enfin, le tabouret fantôme dans *Nacht und Träume* ou ...*que nuages*... constitue un 'podium invisible' désancré.

    Chaque élément figure ainsi dans son propre espace, infini, et semble même produire sa propre lumière. La télévision montre un événement qui a une dimension d'infini, car il ne semble plus y avoir de

frontières et de séparation mais des effractions. L'élément, détaché des autres, ne dépend plus d'un système spatio-temporel naturel, extérieur. Par exemple, la lumière mentale dans *Nacht und Träume* – scène au second plan – est aussi vive que la lumière naturelle émanant de la fenêtre située au fond. Dans *Quoi où* les visages d'abord éclairés grâce à un mécanisme extérieur réglé par la voix – "j'allume" / "j'éteins" – intègrent ensuite le mouvement de la lumière – la mention "j'éteins" / "j'allume" disparaît. Le visage absorbe la lumière et donc abolit l'espace même où la lumière est censée se diffuser. La lumière ne provient pas d'une source unique et l'objet, alors même que le mécanisme des visages se répète, devient lui-même la source lumineuse.

Chaque élément se présente alors dans sa choséité irréductible – celle que Genet reconnaît aux figures de Giacometti, errantes sans attaches, parfois beckettiennes – dans un isolement supérieur à celui que permet le théâtre: "C'est donc la solitude de la personne ou de l'objet représentés qui nous est restituée et nous, qui regardons, pour la percevoir et être touchés par elle devons avoir une expérience de l'espace non de sa continuité, mais discontinuité" (Genet, n. p.). En même temps, la topologie est en déplacement dans cette amorce constante d'espaces tous différents dans une boîte, sans classement, comme les visages dans *Quoi où* et les corps solitaires, même s'ils sont soumis apparemment à une force mutuelle d'attraction ou de répulsion, sur cette aire d'évitement qu'est *Quad*. D'autre part, les échelles des plans et les disproportions, les formats divers, les qualités variées de l'image – le grain de la peau dans *...que nuages...* contraste avec les autres substances – participent aussi de cette hétérogénéité du visible, de cette division, de cette pluralité de mondes possibles.

Les régimes visuels se multiplient, requérant une accommodation du regard dissocié du spectateur. Chez Bram van Velde, Beckett admire "la chose seule isolée par le besoin de la voir, par le besoin de voir. La chose immobile dans le vide, voilà enfin la chose visible. L'objet pur" (1989, 28).

Beckett crée ainsi un dispositif où l'air circule entre les choses. Aux adverbes 'en deçà' et 'au-delà,' qui impliquent une perspective, physique et métaphysique, continuité et progression, il préfère on le sait les expressions du local 'de-ci de-là,' ou 'par-ci par-là.' Beckett garde en mémoire cette perspective comme repère esthétique pour mieux la discuter. Ainsi, tandis que Moran commente les tableaux de maîtres où la perspective associe une ordonnance de l'étendue accommodée à une perception continue et progressive – "je fis cette remarque curieuse, que

la terre à cet endroit, et même les nuages du ciel, étaient disposés de façon à amener doucement les yeux vers le camp, comme dans un tableau de maître" (1951, 208) – Didi, lui, produit des tableaux, au grand dam de Gogo: "Fous-moi la paix avec tes paysages! Parle-moi du sous-sol" (1952, 79).

Le montage d'espaces hétérogènes rabat toute perspective, travaille à la soustraction des coordonnées visuelles – au bout de la longue vue de Clov, aussi, c'est zéro. Trois dimensions, à la télévision, se réduisent à une forme plate, plate-forme, plan chaotique et vibrant puisque les éléments apparaissent moins successivement, en profondeur – l'œil du spectateur se ferait pénétrant – que jouxtés ou juxtaposés, voire superposés. La mise en boîte n'est pas mise en abyme, car la continuité fait défaut entre les éléments qui ne sauraient figurer dans un espace inclusif. Ici, le mode de fonctionnement, le dispositif est exclusif, œuvre à l'exclusion des éléments. Beckett se demande véritablement "quoi où?" mais n'ayant pas de réponse positive, il transforme la question en affirmation, et propose un lieu (où) constitué par la chose (quoi), la chose en son lieu, le lieu propre de la chose définissant ainsi un espace qui invalide les frontières.

On pourrait qualifier cet espace de surface volumineuse ou de profondeur superficielle, car la figure égale le fond, les plans s'enchaînant dans un battement continu, chaque élément avançant ou reculant dans un va-et-vient dont les faux départs, départs et redéparts jalonnent l'œuvre beckettienne. Du coup, jaillit une multitude d'angles morts, puisque la linéarité qui retient les choses se fissure, ouvrant une infinité de perceptions et de situations non réalisées, laissées en jachère, et devinées: l'intervalle, l'hiatus, constituent le véritable lieu de notre investissement de spectateurs. L'espace déboussolé s'ouvre à des zones étranges qui inquiètent notre perception. Chez Beckett amateur de peinture, le non-vu est la lumière du vu, le non-vu est le fond actif du visible. Il faut compter sur lui pour ouvrir le champ visuel qui dépasse le visible. La béance invite donc à la translation, dans cette traversée de la représentation visible à la recherche de l'image, qui permet de faire advenir et de ramener ce qui la borde, non encore visible mais du même espace, avec "une grande vitesse d'échappement" (1989, 24). On ne parlera pas d'invisible. Dès lors, cet espace peut nous apparaître comme un hybride, le chassé-croisé de créatures vivantes et de fantômes. En effet, deux régimes visuels se télescopent: une présence porte en elle une absence et une absence vient hanter le visible. Le dispositif télévisuel serait l'interface d'un positif et d'un négatif. La "cette présence

dehors, cette présence dedans, cette présence entre, de ce qui n'existait pas" (1968, 45), cette faille dans le réglage fixe fatigue nos sens et perturbe notre vigilance sensorielle – les personnages du deuxième *Quad* en sont comme la matérialisation plus qu'ils ne livrent le symptôme de leur propre fatigue. Ainsi, d'une perception lacunaire – nous ne percevons pas le tout de la chose – nous dérivons vers une aperception, ou une perception incidente, qui peut rappeler ce que Walter Benjamin théorisait à propos de ce nouvel inconscient visuel engendré par les nouvelles technologies de la représentation: "la nature qui parle à la caméra n'est pas la même que celle qui parle aux yeux. Elle est autre surtout parce que, à l'espace où domine la conscience de l'homme, elle substitue un espace où règne l'inconscient" (62). Usant des propres termes beckettiens, plus physiques, physiologiques et matérialistes, appelons cet 'inconscient' "obscures tensions internes" (1989, 20). La télévision de Beckett, en fixant le spectateur solitaire devant la boîte où les choses sont figées et suspendues, stimule ce mouvement d'échappement, d'errance et l'œil se replie finalement à l'intérieur du crâne, faute de perception sûre et localisée.

La boite crânienne

Ainsi la mise en boîte relève aussi d'une mise en vue du crâne, boîte crânienne qui est, pour le spectateur, un casse-tête, mais "tout devient simple et clair quand on ouvre l'œil sur le dedans à condition de l'avoir bien sûr au préalable exposé au dehors, afin de mieux jouir du spectacle" (1953, 93).

Beckett expose ensemble dedans et dehors mais surtout semble nous montrer l'œil et les mécanismes mentaux comme cette tache au sol dans *...que nuages...*, qui est à la fois espace de l'action, espace intérieur et peut-être œil qui nous regarde. La structure même suggère souvent que nous sommes dans des têtes, des fors: étymologiquement le for est le tribunal, comme le tribunal intérieur du personnage principal de *Quoi où*. Il faut être juge et partie, à l'instar du personnage de *Textes pour rien*: "être juge et partie, [...] ils [les yeux] se referment, pour regarder dans la tête, pour essayer d'y voir, pour m'y chercher, pour y chercher quelqu'un" (1958, 145). Les personnages beckettiens ne cessent d'affirmer, comme l'Innommable, "je suis dans une tête" (106), "scène et spectateur de tout" (1991, 29). Justement, la boîte télévisuelle est crâne: non seulement Beckett, en ouvrant le crâne, expose une image mentale et une image physique – intérieur et extérieur – mais aussi les instruments et les procédures: le crâne est ouvert, mis en vue;

il ne s'agit pas de montrer seulement ce qu'il produit. Le visible est ainsi ramené au mental: dans cette image rompue que nous avons relevée, faite d'ombres et de lumière, les éléments sont tour à tour concaves et convexes, traduisant les plis et replis du crâne. Par exemple les corps sont recroquevillés et enveloppés ou les visages mangés par l'ombre dans *Quoi où*. Dans *Dis Joe* le visage est en perpétuelle métamorphose ou anamorphose, il ressemble à un crâne avec toutes ses modulations – et Joe est sous l'œil de la caméra qui creuse les traits. Les pièces semblent exposer le monde obscur qui est derrière toute représentation.

Ainsi, l'image dépasse la représentation de l'intérieur et de l'extérieur, elle donne à voir ses conditions de production et constitue un mécanisme. Si l'espace du premier plan et celui du second dans *Nacht und Träume* s'indifférencient – par l'alternance abolissant la hiérarchie et par la luminosité paradoxale – peut-être la raison en est-elle l'importance du passage, du mouvement entre les deux, ce troisième espace.

Inversion, réversibilité, retournement mettent l'accent sur le mouvement même, l'interface. Du dehors est structuré comme du dedans et vice versa: le for est désormais extérieur en même temps que la réalité extérieure s'encrypte, s'involue, s'intériorise. Souvenons-nous de l'interface selon l'Innommable:

> C'est peut-être çà que je sens, qu'il y a un dehors et un dedans et moi au milieu, c'est peut-être ça que je suis, la chose qui divise le monde en deux, d'une part le dehors, de l'autre le dedans, ça peut être mince comme une lame, je ne suis ni d'un côté ni de l'autre, je suis au milieu, je suis la cloison, j'ai deux faces et pas d'épaisseur, c'est peut-être ça que je suis, je me sens qui vibre, je suis le tympan, d'un côté c'est le crâne, de l'autre le monde, je ne suis ni de l'un ni de l'autre.
>
> (160)

Pour n'être ni de l'un ni de l'autre, ni monde ni crâne, ni réalité ni représentation, le dispositif assemble alors plusieurs logiques et nous rend sensibles à la décomposition de toutes les postures et procédures à la base de la représentation – mentale ou matérielle. On peut alors suggérer quelques tensions, quelques forces non achevées en formes, en représentation unifiée: dans *...que nuages...*, texte et image sont peu synchrones – le texte annonce l'image qui le vérifie / le texte commente l'image qui a été vue. Dans *Quoi où* la situation alternée du muet et du

parlant, de l'allumé et de l'éteint, changent la force de chaque élément, son relief. Les combinaisons non épuisées de *Quad* empêchent l'unification de la représentation et paradoxalement minent tout quadrillage définitif – il s'agit d'une cartographie abstraite – l'espace n'étant pas orienté encore dans cette aire de jeu ouverte, l'absence de frontières pouvant constituer un espace orientable mais encore trop aléatoire. La répétition – celle du parcours de *Quad*, celle de l'alternance arbitrairement interrompue de *Quoi où*, celle de l'image réelle et de l'image rêvée dans *Nacht und Träume* – dit l'impossible épuisement du réel.

En outre, le dispositif révèle un télescopage constant des codes. Roland Barthes parlait du texte pluriel comme d'un "tressage des codes," ou d'un "discontinu des codes" (25-28; 165-66) qui brouillent tout code stable. Les courts-circuits sont rendus par la simultanéité que permet le médium audio-visuel et cette saturation des codes. Ainsi, dans *Quoi où* plusieurs logiques se croisent: visuelle – avec la série d'apparitions et de disparitions; sonore – avec épuisement du son; technique – avec la venue et l'extinction de la lumière; linguistique – avec le jeu des variations de la cellule verbale "quoi où"; thématique – avec les réflexions ontologiques, métaphysiques ou politiques; métalinguistique – avec la réflexion sur les moyens et le dispositif. La coprésence tendue des codes ainsi schématisés, abstraits, empêche l'apaisement de la représentation. Le personnage de la pièce résume ainsi l'aporie herméneutique à laquelle est confronté le spectateur: "Comprenne qui pourra" (1986, 98). Personne ne le peut – faute d'un code unificateur.

De plus, la distinction ne saurait s'établir entre les trois instances du système de signes selon Peirce, l'indice – trace mnésique dans *Nacht und Träume* – se superposant à l'icône – image ressemblante par exemple dans *Nacht und Träume*, ou au symbole – par exemple la charité chrétienne dans *Nacht und Träume*. L'investissement du signe est court-circuité et vain dans cet espace où l'on relève de fortes présences – visuelles, sonores, verbales – qui sont toujours cependant affectées d'un signe 'moins': le visuel sans image finie; le verbal sans code discursif continu; l'idée du sens sans le sens; la conscience du sens sans le sens; ou même sans la recherche du sens. En effet, le signifié n'a pas le temps de prendre complètement. Watt, on s'en souvient, évoquait "la présence de rien" (39), ce qui est déjà une présence remarquable.

Il s'agirait donc ici d'une pure virtualité, d'un visuel non figuratif, qui ne ressemble à rien.

On peut ainsi penser que les éléments disposés pour l'œil et pour l'oreille le sont à des fins possibles, comme des propositions de représentation, non des simulacres mais des simulations. Finalement, on relèverait un pur signal sans le signe, une pure simulation sans le simulacre. Le stimulus sensoriel et cognitif non encore orienté dans une représentation rend la question "Quoi où?" plus cruciale: dans ces pièces, en effet, une grande partie reste à actualiser, à contextualiser, à circonstancier et même à visualiser, imaginer et verbaliser, d'où leur aspect brut et le trouble du spectateur devant cette figure non figurative, qui l'engage dans une recherche de la forme absente. Ce qui est difficile à saisir sémiotiquement apparaît dans une forme d'existence propre, pure virtualité d'un visuel hors représentation, dispositif passe-partout susceptible d'être traversé et mis en mouvement par des images et des textes, substance de forces et non visibilité de formes, "endroits secrets jamais les mêmes, mais toujours simples et indifférents, purs endroits toujours, où se mouvoir n'est ni aller venir, où être se fait présence si légère que c'est comme la présence de rien" (Beckett 1968, 39).

Pour conclure, on peut suggérer que ces pièces font glisser, sans frontières, de la technique à la pulsion, l'énergie pulsionnelle dépendant justement de la technique. Paradoxalement, le médium télévisuel choisi par Beckett pour son aspect figé, inaltérable, implique la reconduction possible d'un imaginaire à partir d'une base fixe, d'une matrice. Devant l'œuvre donnée une fois pour toutes – telle est la différence avec la performance théâtrale, essentiellement aléatoire – le spectateur est libre de régler en permanence son imagination. L'activité rythmique continue à laquelle nous invitent ces pièces ne s'épuise pas car la matière ne change pas: c'est le crâne qui modifie tout par le rythme qu'il lui donne. On le sait, chez Beckett, l'imagination se libère d'autant plus qu'elle est entravée – "imagination morte imaginez." La vision en principe standardisée de l'anti-performance télévisuelle devient une vision plurielle: décontextualisés, texte et image stimulent l'usage, la manipulation, les connexions des synapses – "Synapsis Shuffle" selon l'expression de Rauschenberg, qui intitula ainsi une œuvre de 1999 – l'opération mentale.

Ce dispositif ascétique, ce figural sans figuration est tendu vers son horizon qui est la mise en ordre, la structuration en verbe et en imaginaire. En somme l'écrivain crée l'outil de production et la technique crée la rhétorique. Dans cette forme de brutalité que rendent les pièces pour la télévision, le signe retrouve ainsi une certaine fraîcheur. Francis

Bacon concédait que "c'est toujours par les techniciens que l'on trouve les vraies ouvertures" et il revendiquait par là même la richesse de "l'imagination technique" (cité dans Duras 1995, 333-34). Avec Beckett également, on passe de l'imagination de la matière à l'imagination née de la technique. Finalement, Beckett ne se sert plus de l'appareil pour donner une représentation du réel mais la représentation du monde dépend exclusivement de l'appareillage utilisé, d'une technique d'expression qui porte en elle le sens, en creux. On peut y voir une poétique de la technique, poétique "borderless," car ouverte sur l'inconnu de son résultat. Si Marguerite Duras écrivait "écrire c'est tenter de savoir ce qu'on écrirait si on écrivait" (1993, 53), Beckett nous montre comment l'utilisation de la technique audio-visuelle constitue la tentative de voir et savoir ce qu'on imaginerait et écrirait si on écrivait.

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VOYONS VOIR BECKETT RÉALISATEUR:
qui voit quoi où?
ou: n'y a-t-il vraiment que nuages
passant dans le ciel à la télévision?

Anne-Cécile Guilbard

...que nuages..., one of the few television plays by Beckett that deviates from the law of the continuous shot, explicitly interrogates the conditions of the image's visibility. In this sense it exemplifies the contest between visual and literary image in Beckett's oeuvre. A close look at three of the work's constituents (its text, schema, and production) reveals a reciprocal relation between the vision of H and F, which recalls the problematic of *Film* and the pursuit of O by Œ. In the present instance, however, the poetic image appears the ideal and absent site of a possible union.

'Qui voit?' est la question, métaphysique à bien des égards, que pose *Film* d'une pure façon technique, avec ses deux caméras subjectives. Le caméraman Jim Lewis faisait remarquer que l'une des caractéristiques des œuvres audiovisuelles de Beckett consistait dans le plan continu et la caméra unique, comme si un point de vue et un seul, celui de "l'œil fauve" devait être représenté dans les œuvres audiovisuelles de Beckett. "Toujours une caméra, une seule" (Lewis, 372), soulignait le technicien, et le plan continu s'avère en effet la technique utilisée dans la quasi-totalité des pièces: *Dis Joe*, *Nacht und Träume*, *Quad*, ainsi que les adaptations de *Quoi où* et de *Pas moi* pour l'écran. Seuls *Trio du fantôme* et *...que nuages...* dérogent à cette règle. Dans cette dernière pièce, Beckett articule ensemble trois plans "maintenu[s] de bout en bout" (1992, 39) par des fondus enchaînés: l'homme qui se souvient à sa table invisible (H), le plateau (P) entouré d'ombre où l'homme circule, et le visage de la femme (F) qui apparaît à l'homme. Le point de vue change donc, au cours de cette pièce, et c'est lui qu'on veut interroger.

Points de vue et points de voix

…que nuages… a pour sujet cet homme qui désire qu'une femme lui apparaisse, et son incapacité à faire venir à loisir cette image; dans *Mal vu mal dit*, le narrateur traquait de la même manière les apparitions de la vieille femme dans son logis. Toutefois, si dans le texte comme dans la pièce pour la télévision il est difficile et peut-être vain d'essayer de savoir à quels yeux, ceux de chair ou les autres, cette image doit apparaître, demeure cette différence majeure que, image rêvée ou seulement vue, elle apparaît cette fois clairement visible aux yeux du spectateur à l'écran.

Il n'y pas en effet dans *…que nuages…* comme dans *Dis Joe* conflit de l'imaginaire du texte (avec les images textuelles de l'amoureuse noyée) et du visible de l'écran (avec le plan qui se resserre sur le visage de Joe, et ses yeux). Alors, on s'en souvient, le texte dit par la voix féminine portait ses propres images, notamment celles du suicide de l'amoureuse, pendant que d'autre part, à l'écran, on ne voyait visiblement que Joe, de plus en plus près, dans sa chambre, jusqu'au gros plan final sur son sourire énigmatique. Au contraire, dans *…que nuages…* tout porte à croire que ce visage de femme apparaît à l'écran comme il est censé apparaître à H, et l'on aurait alors ici, très singulièrement, accès à ce que voit le personnage.

On sait que V commence par décrire les conditions de ces apparitions: "Lorsque je pensais à elle c'était toujours la nuit. Je rentrais – ," puis qu'il corrige et reprend: "Lorsqu'elle apparaissait c'était toujours la nuit" (1992, 41). Pendant ce temps, le plan qui le montre sur le plateau recommence à l'identique. En réalité, deux changements s'opèrent dans cette reprise. La première, linguistique, transforme V, le sujet du 'penser,' en objet de l'apparition: les rôles s'échangent, 'elle' objet indirect devient sujet, et 'je' disparaît. Dès lors la pensée se trouve explicitement évacuée au profit d'un régime visuel d'apparition, auquel peut légitimement s'identifier le spectateur qui justement ne fait qu'attendre lui aussi devant son écran que quelque chose paraisse, lui apparaisse[1]. Deuxième changement: à la reprise de la scène, ce n'est plus 'je' qui pense, c'est 'elle' qui apparaît comme circonstance donnée du plan qui ressurgit: "Lorsqu'elle apparaissait, c'était toujours la nuit. Je rentrais – [...] C'est ça" (41-42): ce que l'on voit alors à l'écran, c'est ainsi l'un des moments où "elle apparaissait."

Suite à la correction, H paraît donc se placer cette fois face au plan du plateau dans la même position que le spectateur, spectateur de l'apparition de 'elle.' Le changement est d'autant plus considérable que

"lorsqu'elle apparaissait" définit maintenant les circonstances qui sont visibles. En d'autres termes, le schéma que présente Beckett quant à ce plan du plateau semble, dans l'intervalle du "Non, pas exact" (41), avoir changé de point de vue. Dans le texte publié, le schéma représente deux droites qui s'ouvrent sur un cercle (1, 2, 3, 4) en partant d'un point (5). L'auteur précise: "1. Ouest, les chemins. 2. Nord, le sanctuaire. 3. Est, le cagibi. 4. Position debout. 5. Caméra" (40). À la première occurrence, "lorsque je pensais à elle," le sujet de la pensée, du verbe, comme de la vision semble H, dont on entend la voix V.[2] V (ou H) serait alors à la place 5 du schéma, qui présente ainsi le plan de son point de vue: $V = 5$. Le point 5, caméra, constitue en effet intuitivement pour le spectateur le point de vue de la voix parce que la voix commente ce que le plan présente, comme si la voix, dès lors, 'voyait' ce qu'elle évoque. La correction "Non, pas exact" renverse le phénomène sur un mode en effet plus juste, car ce que la voix commente lui est étranger, n'est pas de l'ordre de la pensée mais du visible, de l'apparition télévisuelle (de la même manière que la bande son est indépendante de la bande image). V en corrigeant ne précise ainsi pas simplement 'lorsque je la voyais,' il effectue ce renversement par lequel il cède sa position 5 à 'elle,' sujet de l'apparition muette, parallèle. La première séquence introduite par "lorsqu'elle apparaissait" ne la montre d'ailleurs jamais apparaissant: elle le montre lui, qui rentre – et il faudra ainsi un changement de plan, autrement dit encore un changement de point de vue pour qu'on la voie, elle. En outre, voudrait-on montrer, cette hypothèse selon laquelle ce plan du plateau où H 1 circule serait effectué du point de vue de 'elle' se justifierait encore par d'autres aspects.

Sortir du champ et se retirer dans le noir

En effet, à reprendre le schéma de Beckett quant à la configuration du plateau et du point de vue qui le présente, on constate que comme dans *Quoi où* le point de vue est placé au Sud non mentionné par rapport aux ombres Ouest, Nord et Est; mais il y a plus: les lignes qui, en partant du point 5, définissent le champ de la caméra, interdisent de voir dans les directions Ouest et Est; et quand le personnage sort du halo (comme souvent dans les œuvres de Beckett) par la gauche ou par la droite, il sort de surcroît du champ. Il n'en va, en revanche, pas de même pour l'ombre Nord, vers quoi le champ s'élargit géométriquement à l'infini, paraissant en cadrer le maximum. En d'autres termes, quand le personnage disparaît dans l'ombre Nord, s'il sort du halo, il ne sort en revan-

che pas du champ: seule l'absence de lumière interdit de l'y voir. S'il prétend s'y évanouir, "dans [son] petit sanctuaire," "où personne ne pouvait [le] voir, dans le noir" (42), il demeurerait cependant visible "Pour un œil n'ayant pas besoin de lumière pour voir" comme celui de *Mal vu mal dit* (1981, 8).

Étrangement en effet, le plan montre H, en "longue robe de chambre et calotte gris pâle," "assis sur un tabouret invisible, courbé sur une table invisible" (39). Bruno Clément a remarqué ce paradoxe: "pourquoi un tabouret, puisqu'il est invisible? et qui saura jamais que c'est sur un tel siège qu'il est assis, sinon un lecteur, improbable, du synopsis de la pièce?" (97-98). De fait, si la description s'attache ainsi à désigner des éléments invisibles dans le plan, peut-être doit-on y voir une manière de signaler que ce plan, cette vision étrange qui recense sans les voir l'existence de meubles invisibles, correspond à un œil spécial: ce plan-là, sur H, n'est pas vu par un œil ordinaire. Comme si, dans le sanctuaire de l'ombre Nord, où en effet H disparaît revêtu de sa robe de chambre et de sa calotte, la règle selon laquelle "personne ne pouvait [le] voir dans le noir" devait subir un infléchissement, une exception, car c'est bien ce plan sur H qui nous est présenté; et cette aptitude à se frayer dans l'invisible des meubles environnants une image de H assis et courbé dans le noir isole cette vision qu'un seul regard évoqué dans la pièce peut dès lors assumer. Seule F peut voir ainsi, avec ses "yeux qui ne voient pas," H recroquevillé dans son sanctuaire parmi ses meubles invisibles, "au plus profond du cœur de la nuit" (43), hors le halo dans l'ombre Nord. Dès lors à l'origine du plan du plateau, F se tiendrait au Sud innommé; et à l'origine du plan sur H, les "lueurs / Présentes dans [son regard] jadis" permettraient de le voir, lui, dans le noir.[3]

"Lorsqu'elle apparaissait, c'était toujours la nuit," la vision de F vient en effet avec l'ombre autour du halo: précisément de l'ombre Sud, cet oxymore, elle dirige son regard droit vers l'Ombre Nord. Comme Murphy, "pour qu'il pût voir, il fallait qu'il fît non seulement nuit, mais sa nuit à lui. Murphy croyait qu'il n'y avait pas de nuit comme la sienne" (1938, 70). Murphy alors pouvait voir Célia, "loin de ses yeux"; n'est-ce pas dans *...que nuages...* sa nuit à 'elle' qui apparaît aussi et permet de voir H? Certes on prend ici la pièce à rebours de son texte, qui à l'inverse ne rend compte que des difficultés d'apparition, à H, de 'elle.' Néanmoins c'est bien cette relativité de H comme destinataire de l'apparition que H lui-même suggère, encore dans une reprise, une correction, lorsqu'il dit: "Je commençais à la supplier, elle, d'apparaître, de m'apparaître" (43). Pas de doute ici sur le sujet de

l'apparition, mis en évidence par l'incise; à l'inverse, la précision tardive "d'apparaître, de m'apparaître" signale bien le défaut du destinataire. La version anglaise le confirme qui sépare "I began to beg, of her, to appear, to me" (1984, 260). Elle apparaîtrait dès lors, parfois, aussi sans apparaître à H. C'est en effet le "cas zéro," également évoqué, "de loin le plus fréquent" (47), où il la suppliait en vain. Le plus souvent, les plans sur H et sur le plateau montrent ainsi sa vision à elle, sans qu'il la voie, lui.

La réciprocité des points de vue entre H et F

Dans la mesure où les plans de la caméra semblent présenter une énonciation inverse de celle du texte dit par V, la pièce invite dès lors à dissocier voix et images. Une sorte de réciprocité apparaît entre 'elle' et H car tous deux en effet, de manière équivalente, se présentent comme des images. On sait que H attend de F qu'elle "apparaisse," mais de la même manière, V dit, décrivant les actions de H:

> 11. V. quittais chapeau et pardessus, revêtais robe de chambre et calotte, réapparaissais –
> 12. *H1 en robe de chambre et calotte émerge de l'ombre Est, avance de cinq pas et se tient immobile face à l'ombre Ouest. 5 secondes.*
> 13. V. réapparaissais et debout comme ci-devant, mais face à l'autre côté, exhibant l'autre versant (*5 secondes*), finalement me détournais pour m'évanouir –
> 14. *H1 fait un quart de tour à droite et avance de cinq pas pour disparaître dans l'ombre Nord. 5 secondes.*
> 15. V. m'évanouir dans mon petit sanctuaire […].
>
> (1992, 42, je souligne)

Ainsi H se comporte lui-même, au même titre que F, comme une apparition. Dans le texte anglais original, on lit aussi: "*reapppeared*," "*emerges*," "*exhibiting the other outline*," "*vanished*" (259), et l'effet est d'autant plus prégnant que chaque réplique commence par une anadiplose du verbe sans reprise du sujet: cette atténuation – cet amoindrissement – du sujet contribue à verser H du côté du fantôme. Aussi bien H que F s'avèrent des images, des apparitions – du reste, on s'en doutait, là a toujours été leur réalité télévisuelle...

Le texte anglais met de surcroît l'accent sur une réciprocité que ne transmet que mal la traduction française lorsqu'elle dit "je commençais

à la supplier, elle, d'apparaître, de m'apparaître" (43), car l'anglais fait clairement entendre une oscillation, un va-et-vient: "21. V. *Then, crouching there, in my little sanctum, in the dark, when none could see me, I began to beg, of her, to appear, to me. Such had long been my use and wont. No sound, a begging of the mind, to her, to appear, to me*" (260). Le rythme final de la phrase fait entendre ce que la disposition du plateau avait déjà mis en place avec les points cardinaux: "to her"/"to me" forment comme Nord/Sud les deux directions d'un même axe. On l'a vu avec le schéma, les points cardinaux spécifient une direction du regard, du Sud vers le Nord. Or, c'est justement au Nord que H se rend pour disparaître en même temps que pour supplier F d'apparaître (de la même manière qu'on a suggéré que F, invisible, voit apparaître H de la position Sud où elle se trouve), comme si l'axe Nord-Sud constituait l'axe à l'intérieur duquel chacun, de H et de F, peuvent s'apparaître l'un à l'autre, dans un dispositif bilatéral où la position Sud permettrait de regarder au Nord, et la position Nord de regarder au Sud.[4] À l'équivalence des personnages en tant qu'images répond ainsi la réversibilité des regards: H et F s'avèrent ainsi aussi bien voyants que visibles.

On retrouve ici le renversement toujours possible et récurrent dans l'œuvre de Beckett du *percipi* en *percipere*. Ici aussi bien que dans *Film*, l'auteur distingue les deux visions, non plus au moyen d'une différence de qualité de l'image,[5] mais grâce au changement d'espace d'un plan à l'autre. L'identité du sujet et de l'objet est à nouveau interrogée (on ne peut dire lequel est à l'origine de l'apparition de l'autre, puisqu'ils sont deux); car ici comme dans *Film* la complémentarité est établie de façon nécessaire, et toujours sur ce mode de la réciprocité (*percipere*/*percipi*; to her/to me, Nord/Sud), sur le mode du face-à-face impossible qu'implique l'axe optique – ce dernier empêche en effet de voir et d'être vu à la fois. Loi de l'image visible: il lui faut pour être vue cesser à son tour de voir. Ainsi peut-on interpréter "those unseeing eyes" (260) (ces yeux qui ne voient pas; je traduis) que F a lorsqu'elle apparaît et s'attarde: jamais les yeux de l'image ne voient.

Cette réciprocité, cette réversibilité du *percipere* et du *percipi*, de l'œil et de l'objet, mettent comme dans *Film* en question le sujet. Ainsi en témoigne l'ambiguïté de la séquence 33: "V. Lingered. *5 seconds*. With those unseeing eyes I so begged when alive to look at me. *5 seconds*" (260; je souligne). La position du complément "when alive," et encore l'absence de sujet, ouvrent deux interprétations possibles: faut-il entendre "when [they were] alive" ou "when [I was] alive"? Edith

Fournier a maintenu justement l'ambiguïté dans sa traduction: "avec ce regard perdu que, <u>vivant</u>, je suppliais tant de se poser sur moi" (45; je souligne). Il semble que se marque ici le terme logique de l'équivalence proposée dans toute la pièce entre les apparitions de 'je' et les apparitions de 'elle,' leur statut réciproque d'image et de points de vue, un terme où se soulève pour ne plus jamais se fixer l'ambivalence du sujet et de l'objet: qui est vivant de celui qui suppliait ou de celle qu'on suppliait? Est-ce celui qui voit ou celle qui est vue? Comme dans le fameux rêve du papillon de Tchouang-Tseu (Tchouang-Tseu rêvait-il qu'il était un papillon, ou bien un papillon rêvait-il qu'il était Tchouang-Tseu?), la question posée dans *…que nuages…* est peut-être ici encore celle de l'être et de l'étant, ou celle du *cogito*, l'une de ces questions que Beckett traite à nouveau sur le mode concret des contraintes propres à l'image visible, comme il avait traité l'*esse est percipi* de Berkeley dans *Film* sur le mode du slapstick.

Notre analyse ici doit bien sûr beaucoup à Deleuze, et même sans qu'on se réfère précisément aux trois langues qu'il inventait dans *L'épuisé*: celui qui voit n'est qu'une image, tout autant que ce qu'il voit – par définition chez Deleuze les images se réfractent les unes les autres… Reste cependant que parmi ces images s'en distingue une, et une seule, qui n'a pas la même valeur que celles qui montrent H 1, ou F: "que nuages passant dans le ciel" ressemble à "la photographie du jardin d'hiver" dans *La chambre claire* de Roland Barthes. Image centrale, elle soutient tout le propos de l'œuvre en ce qu'elle le motive, mais elle n'est pas montrée. Non seulement les mots empruntés à W. B. Yeats par Beckett comme la photo de la mère de Barthes ont à voir avec le souvenir douloureux des morts, mais il semble en outre que ces deux images, littéraire chez l'un et photographique chez l'autre, portent chez chacun une théorie de l'image.

Valeur de l'image absente

Dans l'article où il discute la définition de l'image deleuzienne appliquée à l'œuvre de Beckett, et à *…que nuages…* en particulier, Bruno Clément propose une classification des différentes images: il distingue ainsi les images 0 (images données au lecteur par le texte de la pièce), les images 1 (données au téléspectateur à l'écran et portées par la voix), et enfin l'image 2 (le visage de la femme donné – parfois – au narrateur). On pourrait ajouter une sorte d'image 3, qui particulariserait celle des "nuages passant dans le ciel."

Il s'agit en effet cette fois[6] clairement d'une "image pas pour les yeux faite avec des mots pas pour les oreilles," réalisation de l'improbable décrit dans *Comment c'est*: "pas pour les yeux" car personne ne la voit; "des mots pas pour les oreilles" (70) sont en effet murmurés en silence qu'il faut à V doubler pour rendre les vers audibles. Quelle pourrait être la valeur, dès lors, de cette image 3 au sein d'une pièce pour la télévision qui a pour sujet explicite les conditions de l'apparition de l'image? Que vient faire cette "absente de tout bouquet" mallarméenne au sein de toutes ces images visibles? Le non-lieu poétique et l'idéal qu'il porte y sont en effet désignés, par opposition aux contraintes propres au champ de la vision et à ces axes optiques qui déterminent, qui limitent tellement les images-qui-se-voient. La gravité de l'exception littéraire est immense puisque les nuages remplacent, dit le poème de Yeats, l'éclat de vie dans les yeux des morts; mais c'est un 'artifice flagrant' qui vient remplacer l'union attendue: en assurant le doublage des lèvres de F, alors qu'il la suppliait de le regarder et de lui parler, V n'apporte en effet qu'une réponse très défaillante – on pourrait dire 'déplacée' – au manque dont parle la pièce.

L'image littéraire est désignée ici par la machine télévisuelle comme artifice, artifice sublime, irremplaçable, puisqu'il constitue enfin le lieu, ou le non-lieu, où être ensemble, idéalement. En même temps ersatz dérisoire au désir de voir. En effet, l'image des nuages qui passent dans le ciel, apparaît – précisément sans apparaître – 'comme substitut' au regard et à la parole attendus de F. Beckett, on le sait, avait fait part de sa lassitude croissante des mots, et on peut supposer que c'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles il s'est tourné vers la télévision.[7] L'auteur rend de fait visibles, par les moyens propres à la télévision, l'insuffisance, le désespoir de cette image littéraire, son indigence au regard d'une humanité qui, parce qu'elle a un corps, à vêtir, à dévêtir, à déplacer aux trois points cardinaux, un corps à montrer et des yeux pour voir, est agitée comme l'était van Velde par "le besoin de voir" (1990, 30), ou encore simplement par l'envie de voir, comme Malone, qui notait: "J'ai envie de voir, n'importe quoi, une de ces choses que je n'aurais pu imaginer" (1951, 103).

Notes

1.   Tel est bien le sujet de la pièce: l'attente de voir, indépendamment de la pensée puisque à de rares exceptions près, H dit penser à F (la supplier d'apparaître) sans que son image apparaisse; le "cas zéro" (47) désigne cette absence d'image à voir.

2.   B. Clément différencie l'image de F des autres plans en s'appuyant sur le fait que "la voix emploie à son propos le verbe 'apparaître' qu'elle n'utilise évidemment pas pour commenter les déplacements et changements de tenue que peut observer le spectateur" (93). Dans notre perspective on accordera la même importance à ce que dit de façon audible la voix et à ce que désigne de façon visible l'image, ou le texte du script. On pourrait même supposer que F n'ayant pas de voix audible, c'est peut-être elle qui (ne) dit (pas): "H 1, en pardessus et chapeau, émerge de l'ombre Ouest, etc." c'est-à-dire qu'à l'inverse de V qui énonce le texte, F constituerait le point de vue énonciateur de l'image.

3.   Il s'agit d'un vers de "La Tour" de W. B. Yeats dont Edith Fournier cite la dernière strophe dans une note (Beckett 1992, 38).

4.   On retrouverait cette possibilité du renversement dans *Trio du fantôme*.

5.   Dans les notes du scénario de *Film*, Beckett insistait sur la nécessité de différencier les visions de O et de Œ: "Il faut que la différence soit flagrante," écrivait-il (130).

6.   L'image 2 est aussi, selon B. Clément, une image 1 et une image 0.

7.   Lewis explique au début de son entretien avec Sandra Solov qu' "à propos de la télévision, [Beckett] a dit: 'It's the savage eye' (l'œil impitoyable, l'œil fauve). […] c'est une caméra fixe qui prend un seul point de vue et observe tout le temps" (371). Plus loin, le caméraman déclare: "Chaque parole qu'il écrit maintenant lui donne le sentiment que c'est un mensonge; et c'est une des raisons pour lesquelles il s'est tourné vers la télévision, parce qu'il a été réduit au silence mais que l'image reste encore. On peut encore avoir l'image" (376-77).

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BECKETT'S BORDERLESS WORDS / PAROLES SANS FRONTIÈRES

FUN DE PARTIE:
Puns and Paradigms in *Endgame*

Chris Ackerley

Beckett's bilingual texts and self-translations raise awkward questions as to how two 'different' works can be equally parts of a greater whole or complementary aspects of the 'same' text. In this paper I consider how puns, allusions and other linguistic paradigms constitute points of resistance, particularly when sentiments originally written in one language seek expression in another. By describing the 'machinery' of the pun in terms of 'sameness' and 'difference,' I seek to identify its role in the dialectic of 'equivalence' and 'mis-matching' implicit in the binary relationship of *Fin de partie* and *Endgame*.

> Q: Is life worth living?
> A: Depends on the liver.

> Q: La vie, vaut-elle la peine?
> R: Question de foie.

Returning from his *entretien* with Father Ambrose, Moran in the French *Molloy* arrives home in a vile humour to seek solace in Martha's stew, but in vain: "Le stew me deçut. Où sont les oignons? m'écriai-je. Réduits, répondit Marthe. Je me précipitai dans la cuisine, à la recherche des oignons que je la soupçonnais d'avoir enlevés, sachant combien je les aimais. Je fouillai jusque dans la poubelle. Rien. Elle me regardait, narquoise" (1999, 139). The English text is tolerably faithful to its consort: "The stew was a great disappointment. Where are the onions? I cried. Gone to nothing, replied Martha. I rushed into the kitchen, to look for the onions I suspected her of having removed from the pot, because she knew how much I liked them. I even rummaged in the bin. Nothing. She watched me mockingly" (1958a, 102). What is also missing, of course, is the entire Proustian world called up by the words, "à la recherche," the onions mocking the madeleine. In his later self-translation, Beckett makes no attempt to capture this echo, and the Eng-

lish text is (arguably) impoverished by the failure to do so. However, in
the next paragraph the French Moran succeeds in dozing off, which is
not easy, "quand le malheur n'est pas délimité." The English text offers,
"when pain is speculative"; the echo of Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the
D'Urbervilles* (chap. 35), as previously invoked in Beckett's short story
"Yellow" (1972, 158), adds to the translation at least two intertextual
elements not present in the original. Poetic equilibrium has been, per-
haps, restored, but the experience of reading the two texts is clearly
somewhat different and the networks of internal echoing and external
association have been changed.

Even more so than allusions (which in action they resemble, by
bringing one universe of discourse within the orbit of another and com-
bining them in a linguistic clench), verbal puns are notoriously resistant
to translation. The attempt to find an equivalent for even a simple
phonic jest is often doomed, as in the translation of *Eleuthéria* by Mi-
chael Brodsky:

> M. Krap. … je sens que ma femme approche.
> Mlle Skunk. ta fin?
> M. Krap. ma FEMME. Cette catastrophe.
>
> (1995a, 57)

> M. Krap. … I have a feeling my wife draws near.
> Mlle. Skunk. The end of life?
> M. Krap. My WIFE. That catastrophe.
>
> (1995b, 52)

Brodsky duplicates the echo of "fin" and "femme" with "wife" and
"life," but in order to retain the sense of an ending he is forced to a
somewhat clunky paraphrase. The strategy is not entirely satisfactory,
and one is tempted to agree with the Ottolenghi in "Dante and the Lob-
ster" when Belacqua recalls "one superb pun," "qui vive la pietà
quando è ben morta," but is unable to find in English an equivalent for
the Italian *pietà*, with its double sense of 'pity' and 'piety': "'Now' he
said like a fool 'I wonder how you could translate that?' Still she said
nothing. Then: 'Do you think' she murmured 'it is absolutely necessary
to translate it?'" (Beckett 1972, 19).

Puns are the consequence of the double articulation of language;
that is, of the capacity of a smaller number of units at one hierarchical
level to express a greater number of features at another. Specifically, in

English, a few phonemes (some forty or so) suffice to give voice to a larger number of morphemes, words and utterances; similarly, a larger but nevertheless limited set of grammatical rules structures and regulates the unlimited possibilities of expression; and finally, a large but nevertheless finite set of semantic elements (words) can express the quite literally infinite variety of human experience, the physical and all other possible worlds. The three systems of language, phonology, grammar and lexis, interact in complex ways, and since every sentence or utterance conforms to the patterns of all three it has three structures simultaneously. The relationship between these structures may be described as one of 'manifestation,' one system giving realization to another and each finding its realization outside itself in another system of the language (linguistic ambiguity), or outside language (referential or situational ambiguity). The essential principle is that of the infinite use of finite means, as different hierarchical levels of language are manifest, or find expression in another; but the unavoidable consequence of the finitude of means is 'ambiguity,' the property of sentences that they may be interpreted in more than one way, that is (in the simplest instance), that they may subsume in the one phonic, syntactic and/or semantic form more than one universe of discourse. Or, to put this in another perspective, elements that are the same on one level of language may be seen as different on another.

It can be said of any two things that they are the 'same' or that they are 'different'; but ambiguity complicates this truism by requiring that the linguistic elements be both 'same' and 'different' simultaneously; more precisely, that the elements be seen as 'same' at one level of language or reference, but 'different' at another. Aristotle points out in *De Sophisticis Elenchis* why this must be: "For names are finite, and so is the sum-total of formulae, while things are infinite in number. Inevitably, then, the same formulae, and a single name, have a number of meanings" (165.a.10-13). Redfern puts it more simply: "The fact that people and trees and elephants and cars all have trunks just proves that there are more things than there are words" (7). Puns come in many shapes and forms, including the non-linguistic, but in this essay I shall assume the most obvious manifestation: that a word or utterance is ambiguous when it is the 'same' on the level of phonological representation but 'different' on the level(s) of grammatical and/or lexical representation. In my epigraph, the English word 'liver' may refer to (a) one who lives or (b) a glandular organ of vertebrate animals; the French word *foie* conveys this latter meaning but, unable to express the other

sense, it exploits the phonetic similarity of *foi*, or 'faith.' The effect is similar, but the linguistic machinery is by no means identical. Disjunction is inevitable, because different languages (1) resolve the continuum of sound into different phonemes (French has about thirty-five, most subtly different from their English equivalents); (2) organize language by a very different grammar or set of rules; and (3) have distinctive vocabularies. Linguistic accident, or coincidence, as well as lexical borrowing accounts for some similarities, but more often (as with the Proustian echo in *Molloy*) the translator's problem is to find an effect that is 'equivalent,' rather than exact. For instance, the French title *Fin de partie* implies equally a game of chess and the end of a theatrical play; the English *Endgame* assumes only the former, but may provoke apocalyptic associations more readily than does the original; while the German *Endspiel* more readily echoes the French. And yet, while the three titles are in some respects different, they are equally 'the same'; that is, the similarity is sufficient to allow them to be considered as equivalent – that is, if we choose to acknowledge the 'sameness,' but otherwise if we prefer to accentuate the 'difference.'

Although the vocabulary of English to some degree overlaps with that of French, so that equivalences are often readily found, subtle differences between the languages may complicate the effect. In *Fin de partie*, as Clov feels Nell's pulse, she utters her final word: "Déserte" (pronounced [dezɛrt]; English, "Desert!"). When Hamm wishes to know, "Qu'est-ce qu'elle a baragouiné?" ("What's she blathering about?"), Clov reports: "Elle m'a dit de m'en aller, dans le désert" (39, 1958b, 23). Nell is using the familiar form of the imperative of *déserter* (to abandon, to desert), that is, she is telling him to leave, perhaps to leave Hamm, as throughout the play Clov threatens to do; but this form of the verb corresponds closely with the noun, *le désert* (pronounced [dezɛr], English, 'the desert'). English offers almost the same effect, but the verb 'to desert' (accented on the second syllable) and the noun 'desert' (accented on the first syllable), although spelt identically, differ in stress, the verb iambic and the noun trochaic. Consequently, Clov's "She told me to go away, into the desert" (1958b, 23) is a little forced, despite the considerable equivalence.

Direct equivalence is sometimes possible, particularly when the pun is independent of a particular language, as that on "Kov" and 'Cobh,' the small seaport near the city of Cork (1957b, 72, 1958b, 52); but more often such exactitude is impossible. Consider Hamm's affliction, his sense of something tapping in his head, in the three versions of

the play that Beckett either wrote (*Fin de partie*), translated (*Endgame*), or scrutinized closely in the translation of another (*Endspiel*): French: "C'est peut-être une petite veine" (35); English: "Perhaps it's a little vein" (20); German: "Es ist vielleicht ein Äderchen" (35). Although the French original hints at the sense of *en vain* the suggestion of 'vanity' is more obvious in the English version, where Beckett has developed the ambiguity more explicitly. In the German translation, by contrast, that ambiguity is not so easily invoked, so the translator (Elmar Tophoven, presumably with Beckett's approval) retains only the physiological meaning. However, the *Theatrical Notebooks* record: "*9 Hamm's head-heart 3 (es klopft + Äderchen)*" (qtd. in Gontarski, 118); Gontarski translates this: "9 Hamm's headheart 3 (Es klopt [*recte* tropft][1] & Äder-chen [vein])" (120); and in his Editorial Notes he comments: "1 – Beckett's 'klopt' or 'klopft' from *klopfen*, to knock, is simply an error for 'tropft'" (178). I suspect that it is less an error than an attempt to compensate for the lost pun of the French and English texts, by invoking the phonetic similarity of *klopft*, "[it] knocks," and *tropft*, "[it] drips." As Tophoven has observed, the task is to produce a text that "makes its own statement in translation just as it does in English" (324; a mildly ingenuous comment, as his English was poor and he was trans-lating from the French text). This attempt to make a "statement" may have been dropped, but another was retained: "Es tropft, es tropft in meinem Kopf" (1960, 33); which adds a poetic echo to the more pro-saic English: "There's something dripping in my head" (18).

   Even if phonic identity cannot be easily sustained from one lan-guage to another, phonic play can nevertheless be initiated in each to create effects that are equally exuberant and obliquely equivalent. In *Fin de partie*, Clov finds that he has a flea:

> CLOV. La vache!
> HAMM. Tu l'as eue?
> CLOV. On dirait. (*Il lâche le carton et arrange ses vêtements.*) A moins qu'elle ne se tienne coïte.
> HAMM. Coïte! Coite tu veux dire. A moins qu'elle ne se tienne coite.
> CLOV. Ah! On dit coite? On ne dit pas coïte?
> HAMM. Mais voyons! Si elle se tenait coïte nous serions baisés.
>   (51)

  In *Endgame* this becomes:

> CLOV. The bastard!
> HAMM. Did you get him?
> CLOV. Looks like it. (*He drops the tin and adjusts his trousers*.)
>   Unless he's laying   doggo.
> HAMM. Laying! Lying you mean. Unless he's *lying* doggo.
> CLOV. Ah? One says lying? One doesn't say laying?
> HAMM. Use your head, can't you. If he was laying we'd be
>   bitched.
>
>   (34)

In the English text, the distinction between *coïte* (coitus) and *coite* (tranquil, silent) is not exact, but Beckett has found a stunning equivalent in the grammatical distinction between "laying" and "lying," which captures the effect completely.

As Beckett insisted in his *Berlin Diary*, there are no accidents in *Endgame*, for the play is all built on analogies and repetitions (qtd. in Gontarski, xiii). This is not technically correct, as the correlation between 'laying' and 'lying' (as that of *coïte* and *coite*) derives from accidents of language; but the comment reflects the extent to which patterning dominates the play, motion echoing other motion, posture imitating posture, gestures repeating other gestures, and sounds echoing other sounds. However, and largely as a consequence of ongoing translation and Beckett's own experience as a director, these analogies were more and more accentuated. *Endgame*, for instance, in this passage, offers in the English text echoes that are not present in the original and which testify to a greater complexity: "bastard," invoking God as the bastard (or swine) who does not exist (55); "Use your head" as a reiterated motif (53); and references to dogs that are more insistent than in the French: "Depuis ma naissance" (28) becoming "Ever since I was whelped" (14). The English "bitched" is part of this pattern, whereas the French *baisés* helps constitute a series of sexual echoes largely absent in the translation.

Cultural considerations complicate the effects of the bilingual pun. Consider the following sequence:

> NAGG. Ma bouillie!
> HAMM. Maudit progéniteur!
> NAGG. Ma bouillie!

HAMM. Ah il n'y a plus de vieux! Bouffer, bouffer, ils ne pensent
  qu'à ça!

(23)

NAGG. Me pap!
HAMM. Accursed progenitor!
NAGG. Me pap!
HAMM. The old folks at home! No decency left! Guzzle, guzzle,
  that's all they think of.

(9)

The rhetorical structure of the passages is equivalent, save that the Eng-
lish text adds "No decency left"; and both allude ("Maudit progéniteur"
/ "Accursed progenitor") to the theme of Noah and the possibility of life
starting over again; but each makes a slightly different use of accidents
present in the one language and culture yet absent from the other. The
phonic half-echo of the French "Mon bouillie" and "Maudit" is not
present in the English version, which, however, makes use of the lin-
guistic accident that the "pap," a literal translation of "bouillie," by
chance suggests 'father' and thus triggers Hamm's equivalent response
by a different but nevertheless linguistic mechanism. However, the
French "Ah il n'y a plus de vieux" echoes the lament often voiced after
World War I, in which so many young men died: "Il n'y a plus de jeu-
nes"; and thereby insinuates the motif of post-calamity desolation in a
way that the English text does not attempt. Instead, *Endgame* echoes a
popular Stephen Foster song, and thereby intimates its chorus, "All de
world am sad and dreary…," in a way that the original does not. In
these two instances the effects are contrived by cultural reference,
rather than by linguistic means.
    A further complication of the bilingual pun concerns the mirror-
like relation (with consequent lateral distortions) of the French and
English elements of the text, each as seen from the perspective of the
other tongue. The name Godot, for instance, combines the English
morpheme "god" with the French diminutive "-ot"; it remains a moot
point as to how one whose primary language is English, or French,
responds emotionally to the portmanteau effect. While the 'nails' –
Clov (*clou*), Nell ('nail'), and Nagg (*Nagel*) – retain a triangulation, the
'hammer' of Hamm, to say nothing of Mother Pegg, loses in English
the alienation (*Verfremdung*) effect that the words have in French, al-
though the implication of crucifixion is common to both languages (or,

perhaps, cultures). Many like instances could be discussed, but the con-
notation of Hamlet in Hamm permits a consideration of the Shake-
spearean echoes in the play, these, not surprisingly, being much more
pervasive in the English text than in the French, despite the equal im-
portance of dramatic self-reference in each piece.

As noted earlier, the title, *Fin de partie*, intimates the symbiosis of
theatre and chess as that of *Endgame* does not; but Beckett advances
compensatory strategies in the English text, firstly by imaging Hamm
as a Player King (*Hamlet*) and then by translating "Mon royaume pour
un boueux!" (38) as "My kingdom for a nightman!" (23, *Richard III*,
5.4.7), to intimate not a 'garbage collector' or a 'road sweeper' (in
French), or one who removes night-soil (in English), but rather a chess-
board Knight. Beckett said that this echo was unintentional, but was
willing to accept the pun, and, indeed, pointed it out to others (Gontar-
ski, 54-55). It is difficult to say how implicit the Shakespearean allusion
is in the French original, but the rhythm is similar and *royaume* invites
the intertextual echo; certainly, the English translation makes the allu-
sion more determinate than the French phrase would be on its own.
Likewise, when Nagg finally sinks back into his bin, the French Hamm
comments, "Finie la rigolade" (78), which neatly relates to the end of
the *partie* but which does not altogether convey the effect of the Eng-
lish equivalent, "Our revels now are ended" (56), with its echo of Pros-
pero's farewell speech in *The Tempest*, with its sense of the fading of
the insubstantial pageant just presented, and the sentiment that: "We are
such stuff / As dreams are made on, and our little life / Is rounded with
a sleep" (4.1.154-57), as, indeed, Hamm's life and the play soon will
be. Again, this aspect of *The Tempest* is implicit in the French text
(rather than explicit, as in the English version), even though there is no
citation of Shakespeare as such; indeed, when *Fin de partie* was yet a
two-act draft, act 2 began with this allusion (Gontarski, 62). My instinct
is that the Shakespearean echoes were 'there' in the French from the
start, but that it takes the translation to make them explicit; and in this
sense the two versions are complementary, each needing the other for
its full expression.

Beckett began his translation of *Fin de partie* believing that the
English text would be inferior, "a poor substitute for the original" (qtd.
in Gontarski, xxiii). Curiously, at least until the later, more truly bilin-
gual works, the translations into French of Beckett's English originals,
such as *Murphy* and *Watt*, are much inferior, whereas those texts writ-
ten first in French and subsequently translated into English are at least

the equals of their originals. English, I would argue, was Beckett's native language, and his French, however excellent, did not have for him the same depths and nuances as the language that he shared with Joyce and Shakespeare. Thus, when it came to translating *Fin de partie* into German, and despite Elmar Tophoven's limited knowledge of English, *Endgame* "seems to have become the standard for the revision of French and German texts" (Gontarski, xxiii). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the echoes of *The Tempest* noted above, for as Gontarski notes (62), in his Berlin production Beckett emphasized the allusion by substituting Schlegel's translation of Shakespeare's line, "Das Fest ist jetzt zu Ende," for Tophoven's translation of the original French, "Der Spass ist zu Ende." (The gremlins managed to get into the *Theatrical Notebooks* textual notes with an unintended pun, "Das Fest is jest zu Ende.")

Revenons à nos oignons, that is, let us get to the heart of the matter. As Beckett says in *Murphy*, "In the beginning was the pun." He further reflects, "what but an imperfect sense of humour could make such a mess of chaos?" (65). Enter the element of irrationality, so central to Beckett's vision and implicit equally in the ambiguous nature of natural language. Ambiguity is often considered to be a deficiency of natural language, for its double articulation often leads to lack of clarity or equivocal vagueness; Beckett's distrust of language reflects his instinctive sense of this. Yet ambiguity can equally imply control: an author can exploit the potential for multiple meaning, using the pun to corral and control wild and whirling words and force them to behave; as Humpty Dumpty famously observes in *Through the Looking Glass*, the question is who is to be master – that's all. Puns constitute linguistic resistance, challenging the instinctive preference of the mind for univocal reading by creating from incompatible stable-mates a matched pair, with a textual tension that derives equally from the yoking together of unruly mounts and their striving apart. In this sense, the Janus-like quality of ambiguity constitutes an on-going dialectic between 'validity' and 'indeterminancy,' with respect to the way that E. D. Hirsch might use these words.

The pun is thus a creative device, bringing identified contraries into conjunction, "like syzygetic stars" (Ackerley and Gontarski, 553), and (like Clov) imposing an order in a linguistic universe which, like the physical one, is subject to the First Law of Thermodyamics and entropy. Perhaps the most striking manifestation of this in Modernist literature is the pun-like structure of Joyce's *Ulysses*, in which Stephen

and Bloom, despite their marked differences, come together in a moment of coincidence that, against all the odds, makes an affirmation of human significance against the pervasive incertitude of the void. The essence of the pun, like that of its Other, the metaphor, is to be found in the irrational dialectic of 'same' and 'different,' the metaphor affirming by analogy the 'sameness' of the diverse constituents that it unites, but the pun accentuating the 'difference' of elements forced nilly-willy into a shotgun marriage compelled by linguistic coincidence. To translate the pun is to further attempt the impossible; for the best that can be done is to find effects in the second language that as far as possible replicate the duplicity of the original. 'Equivalence,' thus considered, does not imply exactitude, but rather entails the perceived similarity of things that are different; 'mismatching,' its Shadow, entails the perceived difference of things that are the same. The pun thus plays an important part in the bilingual text by promoting to prominence the dialectic of 'equivalence' and 'mismatching'; but even as that dialectic acknowledges the interdependence of the two texts (here, the French *Fin de partie* and the English *Endgame*) it asserts, in a manner compatible with Beckett's insistence elsewhere on demented particularity, the independence of each. Considered thus, Beckett's bilingual texts and self-translations may be his finest puns.

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"WHAT KIND OF NAME IS THAT?":
Samuel Beckett's Strategy of Naming

Takeshi Kawashima

When Joyce names his hero after a character from Ovid, the name indicates the subjectivity of multiple personalities and reflects Joyce's strategy of parallelism between contemporary life and mythical imagery. Samuel Beckett is one of the few who fully understood the nature of Joyce's nomenclature, and the existence of the character Belacqua in his early fiction, taken from Dante's *Divine Comedy,* bears witness to this awareness. By comparing Beckett's system of naming with Joyce's, I would like to examine the way in which Beckett treats proper names.

Name: Individual and Kind

A name is a word or words through which an entity is designated by others and distinguished from others. Giving a name is a verbal act of individualization: it singles out an individual entity among others. The notion of naming, therefore, concerns a community or a society as well as individual subjects. Given by the other, a name is a bridge between an individual and a community, through which he or she is admitted to society. My purpose here is to explore Beckett's strategy of naming in terms of the individual and the community, the subject and the idea of belonging. In focusing on Beckett's writing from the 1930s and comparing his strategy of naming with his contemporaries' systems of nomenclature, my goal is to situate his activities within the modernist paradigm.

The concept of naming is inseparable from Beckett's writing, as his texts of the 1950s are marked by the failure of naming: "this unnamable thing that I name and name and never wear out […] with what words shall I name my unnamable words" (1997, 125). Examining the system of naming, and pursuing "nameless things" or "thingless names" (1973, 31), Beckett places emphasis on the incongruity between names and objects. *The Unnamable* provides an important example of

how a character changes with his names. In analyzing *Ill Seen Ill Said*,
Alan Badiou identifies Beckett's strategy of inventing "a poetic name":
"This naming emerges from the void of language, like an ill saying
adequate to the ill seen of the noise" (22). Such an invention of names
is prominent in Beckett's later works.

The famous "German Letter of 1937" is important to our argu-
ment, because it exhibits Beckett's notion of the name as naming the
unnamable or the view that names cannot be assimilated to sensory
experience. Referring to the binary opposition between "Nominalism"
and "Realism" in this letter (1983, 173), Beckett tends to favor the
nominalists who, unlike the realists who affirm that universals exist
independently of mind and language, hold that abstract entities and
objects of sense perception only have the words in common that name
them.Beckett's mention of nominalism in his letter relates to the writing
of Gertrude Stein: "The unfortunate lady (is she still alive?) is doubt-
lessly still in love with her vehicle, albeit only in the way in which a
mathematician is in love with his figures" (1983, 172). Thinking per-
haps of Stein's famous passage "Rose is a rose is a rose is a rose" from
"Sacred Emily" (1993, 187), Beckett compares Stein's experimental
use of abstract signs ("the logographs") with the paranoiac work of a
mathematical buff for whom, "the solution of the problem is of entirely
secondary interest, indeed to whom must the death of his figure appear
quite dreadful" (1983, 172-73).

Stein is also well-known for her unique theory of names, which is
summarized in her essay "Poetry and Grammar":

> They [nouns] represent some one but they are not its or his name.
> […] Now actual given names of people are more lively than nouns
> which are the name of anything and I suppose that this is because
> after all the name is only given to that person when they are born,
> there is at least the element of choice even the element of change
> and anybody can be pretty well able to do what they like, they
> may be born Walter and become Hub, in such a way they are not
> like a noun.
>
> (1935, 213)

So Stein distinguishes names from nouns. Nouns are so fixed and stable
that 'chair' remains 'chair' and never changes to 'table.' On the other
hand, names are so changeable that "Walter" might become "Hub." Her
theory involves a parodic nominalism that denies the 'reality' of ab-

stract ideas and considers that names come before things and define their existence.

Stein takes this to the extreme in *Four in America*: "a quantity of Georges. Are they alike. Yes I think so. I may even say I know so. Have they the same character and career. Certainly certainly" (1934, 5). In considering the name to be a mark of the essential core of the individual Stein develops a parody of nominalism. Suggesting that names are not bestowed on one by others, but are the chief determinants of one's character and essence, Stein's logic is tautological as well as essentializing: George is George because of Georgeness. Stein's theory of names evolves into a unique form of association, when she imagines the group of Georges sharing the essential core of Georgeness. The association is mediated neither by biological reproduction nor by cultural solidarity but based on direct and accidental linking via a name.

A practice comparable to Stein's unique exploration of names and individuals can be found in Beckett's *Watt*, in particular when Watt wonders why "Tom is Tom" (133): "For it was not the Tomness of Tom, the Dickness of Dick, the Harryness of Harry, however remarkable in themselves, that preoccupied Watt, for the moment, but their Tomness, their Dickness, their Harryness then, their then-Tomness, then-Dickness, then-Harryness" (134). (Although Beckett's focus on the '-ness' is similar to Stein's quest for Georgeness, his intention can be distinguished from hers, as his search for '-ness' is gradually specified by "their" or "then," which has the effect of ridiculing name essentialism. That is, for Beckett who thinks that "some form of Nominalist irony might be a necessary stage" (1983, 173), the Steinian approach to names is only part of the process of dissolving the notion of individualism.

Joyce's System of Naming
Beckett's exploration of names was already evident in his first publication, *Dante... Bruno. Vico.. Joyce* (1929), which discusses at one point Joyce's *Work in Progress* in relation to Vico's thought on the origins of language:

> The early inability to abstract the general from the particular produced the Type-names. It is the child's mind over again. The child extends the names of the first familiar objects to other strange objects in which he is conscious of some analogy. The first men, un-

able to conceive the abstract idea of 'poet' or 'hero', named every
hero after the first hero, every poet after the first poet.

(1983, 25)

Through the custom of "designating a number of individuals by the
names of their prototypes" (Beckett 1983, 25), the name of Homer be-
comes a noun meaning 'poet.' In drawing attention to such avoidance
of giving a specific name to an individual, Beckett here diverges
slightly from Stein's parodic use of nominalism. While Stein's method
comes down to the direct linking of an individual to another individual,
Beckett's description of Vico's shaping of "Type-names" is put forward
to cause intentional confusion between a type and a name. In bringing
up "Type-names" perhaps Beckett had Joyce's character Stephen Deda-
lus in mind to whom he refers in other parts of his essay (1983, 22, 28).
Dedalus is named after the renowned craftsman, sculptor, and inventor
who built the Labyrinth in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and was famous for
fashioning the wings with which he and his son Icarus were able to
escape from Crete after their imprisonment by Minos. Joyce's naming
implies correspondences between Dublin and Crete, and so Stephen's
life there is seen as a kind of imprisonment. In *A Portrait of the Artist
as a Young Man* (1916), the allusion becomes explicit when Stephan
Dedalus directly addresses Ovid's Daedulus: "Old father, old artificer,
stand me now and ever in good stead," and desires to "go, shaking the
winds of their exultant and terrible youth" (Joyce, 282). Thus Joyce
designates his character in relation to Ovid's prototype.

What is important here is that the "father" Dedalus evokes is not
the blood relation but the fictional father of Greek myth, the character
with whom he shares his name D[a]edalus. The name Dedalus is there-
fore not only a mark that indicates his aspiration for the imaginary fa-
ther; it also indicates a desire to escape life in Dublin and to identify the
group or the community to which his spirit belongs. The name is not a
mere sign of an individual but conveys a sense of alignment or solidar-
ity: "Then Nasty Roche had said: – *What kind of a name is that*? And
when Stephen had not been able to answer Nasty Roche had asked: –
What is your father? Stephen" (27; emphasis added). Roche's question
gets to one of the major points of this novel. Names, and in particular
Stephen Dedalus's surname, point not to the flesh-and-blood family,
but to the type of the mythic race he wants to create. Stephen's failure
to answer the question "What is your father?" attests to his hesitation as

to where to locate his origin, whether in his inescapable blood relations or in the world he desires to bring into existence.

The Name Belacqua

As a new kind of relationship opposed to filial relationship, "Type-names" are developed in Beckett's creative writing from the 1930s. In particular, *Dream of Fair to Middling Women* and *More Pricks than Kicks* feature the protagonist Belacqua whose eponym is in Dante's *Divine Comedy*. In life a Florentine craftsman of musical instruments, Belacqua is a minor character who appears only in the fourth canto of Dante's Purgatory. Not allowed to enter purgatory because of his sinful slothfulness, he is forced to linger in ante-purgatory. What impresses us is his famous posture: "[He] [w]as seated on the ground, and clasped his knees, / Holding his face between them buried low" (Dante, 162). The image and characteristics are faithfully reflected in Beckett's text where Belacqua is introduced as "a megalomaniac you see with his head in his thighs as a general rule" (Beckett 1993, 66).

Imitating Joyce's mythical method, Beckett's naming seeks to turn the contemporary scenery of the streets of Dublin into an ante-purgatory. Beckett's method, however, needs to be distinguished from that of Joyce, which uses the mythical Greek name to oppose a world of cultural affiliation to the hierarchy of blood filiations. Our questions thus are: What kind of name is Belacqua? What 'type' does the name imply?

Belacqua is an Italian name, but in Beckett's work, it does not re-fer us exclusively to its original world. Rather than making a world after the model of the original text, Beckett dislocates the structures that implicitly underpin those original texts. "Dante and the Lobster," the opening story of *More Pricks than Kicks*, portrays Belacqua's afternoon activities, which consist of preparations for lunch, the purchase of a lobster for dinner with his aunt, and an Italian lesson. The narrative is so disjunctive that the juxtaposition of each episode is devoid of or-ganic linking. The story is, of course, characterized by frequent allu-sions to Dante, and this is epitomized in the opening scene of Belac-qua's close reading of the passage in the second canto of Dante's Para-dise about the spots on the moon (1972, 9-10). The irony is that the namesake of Dante's minor character refused entry into purgatory is depicted perusing a passage from Dante's Paradise.

Outnumbered by biblical allusions, the Dantean echoes, however, are not the privileged frame of reference in "Dante and the Lobster."

For example, Belacqua is also modeled on Cain, as is suggested about his musing about the spots on the moon while preparing his lunch: "The spots were Cain with his truss of thorns, dispossessed, cursed from the earth, fugitive and vagabond" (1972, 12).[1] Belacqua shares a stigma with Cain, who is destined for exile and dispossession. The sinner's lineage is extended when "Dante and the Lobster" mentions McCabe, a real prisoner sentenced to death, whose execution is scheduled for the following day. When Belacqua deploys an old *Herald* on the table, he finds the "rather handsome face of McCabe the assassin" staring up at him (10). Afterwards, Belacqua's mind is haunted by McCabe's image, and every time Belacqua sets eyes on it, a subliminal effect is added to his secret sympathy for the condemned. Belacqua, Cain, and McCabe all share the negative legacy of sin and punishment, in which the lobster of the title too is enmeshed. When the lobster is brought into the kitchen of Belacqua's aunt, and "exposed cruciform" (21), it serves as a reminder of the crucifixion of Christ and indicates the possibility of salvation. In implying the possibility of resurrection, the lobster offers a contrast to the Cain-McCabe association with unredeemable sin.

Beckett's strategy in regard to moral judgment in "Dante and the Lobster" is prominent in the scene where Belacqua complains to the grocer about the smell of cheese: "the grocer, instead of simply washing his hands like Pilate, flung out his arms in a wild crucified gesture of supplication" (14).[2] As Pilate presided at the trial of Christ and authorized his crucifixion, this passage reminds us of a terrible scene of execution. But Beckett's purpose is to dislocate the antagonism that appears in the Bible. The bringing together of Pilate's evasive gesture and the crucified figure of Christ cuts Beckett's writing off from the biblical context. Demonstrating that Pilate and Christ are not in a state of antagonism but interchangeable, Beckett overturns the original texts and puts into question the distinctive categories of sin and punishment.

My argument focuses on the name of Belacqua, because within it the complexities of the dislocated threads of sin and punishment, crucifixion and resurrection are crystallized. As Kay Gilliland Stevenson indicates:

> In English, Belacqua as 'beautiful water' is ironically appropriate for the lobster's violent end. In Irish, the name changes to *fionn uisce* or Phoenix (the transformation by which Phoenix Park got its name), evoking one of the traditional symbols of Christ, as the

phoenix which once in a thousand years bursts into flame and arises again from the ashes.

(41)

The name Belacqua anticipates the moment when the lobster is boiled alive toward the end of the story. On the other hand, when "beautiful water" is further rendered as *fionn uisce*, Irish for 'phoenix,' it reminds us of resurrection, and repeats the crucifixion motif.[3] Shifting between English and Irish, Belacqua simultaneously means death and resurrection, or sin and reincarnation, and bifurcated ways are implied for him: one leads to condemnation and the other to resurrection.

God Mistranslated / *Pietà* Translated

When the images of McCabe and the lobster and the allusions to Cain and Christ converge around the issue of the possibility of salvation, we are presented with theological questions: Is resurrection possible? Does God help us? The questions are summarized in the last scene, which depicts the lobster boiled alive: "Well, thought Belacqua, it's a quick death, God helps us all. / It is not" (22). No sooner has the statement been made than it is negated. In this scene, whether God helps us or not is ambiguous. Such ambiguity penetrates into all the references to the Savior or God in "Dante and the Lobster."

A first example is presented at the outset of the story when Belacqua struggles with the passage in which Beatrice explains the spots on the moon to Dante: "She showed him in the first place where he was at fault, then she put up her own explanation. She had it from God, therefore he could rely on its being accurate in every particular" (9). Insofar as God's explanation is conveyed to Dante and, by extension, to Belacqua only via Beatrice's mediation, the possibility of direct communication with God is put aside. Another example is found when Belacqua is asked to translate lobster into French: "He [Belacqua] did not know the French for lobster. Fish would do very well. Fish had been good enough for Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" (19-20). 'Lobster' is mistranslated into French as 'fish,' which is in Greek rendered as *ichthus*, an early Christian acronymic cipher standing for 'Iesous CHristos THeou 'Uios Soter' (Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour).

While Dante's journey toward the heavenly vision undergoes a threefold process, in "Dante and the Lobster," "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour" emerges at the end of a threefold (mis-)translation of 'lobster' via the unmentioned French *poisson* 'fish' and the Greek *ich-*

thus. When the divine name is not substantial but rhetorical, the quest for God and Savior is indefinitely extended. Rather than asking onto-logical questions about where God is and what name God holds, Beckett develops linguistically kaleidoscopic images of God.

Beckett's focus on God's name bears the seal of a time when cer-tainty about such matters was being put into question. In *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Joyce offers a unique approach toward God's name, which serves as a counterpoint to Beckett's inquiry into the divine name:

> God was God's name just as his name was Stephen. DIEU was the French for God and that was God's name too; and when anyone prayed to God and said DIEU then God knew at once that it was a French person that was praying. But, though there were different names for God in all the different languages in the world and God understood what all the people who prayed said in their different languages, still God remained always the same God and God's real name was God.
>
> (35)

While the different names of God bear evidence of a Babel-like confu-sion of languages, God is the existence that transcends the multilingual situation in which the small boy Stephen Dedalus speculates about the real name of God. The contrast between God's trans-lingualism and human multilingualism adds fuel to the modernist exploration of lan-guage. Joyce's Dedalus and Beckett's Belacqua share a method in which an exploration into the unknowable name of God is comically portrayed. A difference is, however, identifiable: while Joyce's God is trans-lingual Beckett's "Saviour" is translational, submerged in the human activity of language, and occasionally appearing as the end of a mistranslation.

In "Dante and the Lobster," the troublesome question of transla-tion and mistranslation is raised not only for names but also in relation to a famous passage of the *Divine Comedy*. Quoting from the passage about one of "Dante's rare movements of compassion in Hell," "qui vive la pietà quando è ben morta," Belacqua asks his Italian teacher, Signorina Ottolenghi: "I wonder how you could translate that?" (19). The translation is a challenging task, since the Italian word *pietà* means both 'piety,' or the state of being devoutly religious, and 'pity,' or the feeling of compassion caused by the suffering of others. If Ottolenghi

refuses to translate the passage: "Do you think […] it is absolutely necessary to translate it?" (1972, 19), it is because there is no English equivalent for it.[4] Toward the end of the story, the issue reemerges when Belacqua speculates: "Why not piety and pity both, even down below? Why not mercy and Godliness together? A little mercy in the stress of sacrifice [...]. He thought of [...] poor McCabe, he would get it in the neck at dawn. What was he doing now, how was he feeling?" (21). Beckett's intention is not to mourn a lost world in which 'piety' and 'pity' went hand in hand. Rather, he is posing a theological question about divine pity and the improbable pursuit of mercy without "Godliness."

"Dante and the Lobster" presents an encrypted world, and the direct or indirect allusions to Cain and Christ, the images of the lobster and McCabe, and divine messages increase the great complexity of signs that readers as well as characters are required to decode. Haunted by the condemned McCabe and the lobster, Belacqua copes with difficult questions: Is execution a sign of pity for the condemned, and does the lobster's "quick death" proceed with the help of God? Belacqua sympathizes with McCabe and the lobster because he feels as branded and condemned as they in the lineage of Cain. Is it pity to allow an outcast to survive? Or rather, is it redoubled punishment? In the Beckettian "forest of symbols" (1983, 172), biblical notions such as sin, punishment, resurrection and redemption are bewildering, and the boundaries of right and wrong are obscured.

In a world where *la pietà* is separated into different terms, the name Belacqua is also divided into "beautiful water" and *fionn uisce*, functioning as a symbol that refers at the same time to different objects. Cain, McCabe, Christ, and the lobster appear to confound the processes of translation, metaphor, and catachresis. "Dante and the Lobster" presents us with many signs of affiliations to which Belacqua may be linked: Belacqua the condemned, Belacqua the exiled, Belacqua the resurrected. The kaleidoscopic possibilities of associations leave the links in a state of uncertainty. Belacqua is not a hero standing in sublime isolation; rather, as his name implies, he flirts with different associations but is always at a loose end.

Beckett's naming, unlike those of Stein and Joyce, indicates neither a single entity nor an imagined community; rather, Beckett's names are signs of the ambiguous relations between individual and community.

Notes

1.   The origin of the story is found in Genesis (4.5-16).

2.   This is based on the episode from Matthew (27.24).

3.   Strictly speaking, *fionn* means 'clear' rather than 'beautiful.

4.   This passage is from the Inferno (20.28). Henry Johnson's literal translation, for example, "Here pity lives when it is truly dead" (Dante, 79), is not able to convey the range of meanings of *pietà*. Robert Pinsky's translation of this passage is one of the best attempt to date to address this difficulty:

> And my master spoke to me: 'Do you suppose
> You are above with the other fools even yet?
>
> Here, pity lives when it is dead to these.
> Who could be more impious than one who'd dare
> To sorrow at the judgment God decrees?'
>
> (Pinsky, 201)

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LES POINTS DE VUE DE SIRIUS
DANS *L'INNOMMABLE* ET LES *TEXTES POUR RIEN*

Izumi Nishimura

In *L'innommable* and *Textes pour rien*, the absence of concrete personages and the plural nature of the subject are more obvious trends than in Beckett's previous works. The narrator of these texts (a simple head/a ball) contains an energy that is concentrated and liquid like an egg's, the symbol of potentiality. Like "the man from the underground" analyzed by Bakhtin, he has the introspective imagination that results in hypothetical subjects observing their own consciousness and adopting points of view from Sirius. Paradoxically, the Beckettian microcosm fosters the freedom of the macrocosm owing to its perfect closure.

> Quelqu'un est là, où je suis seul. […] Là où je suis seul, je ne suis pas là, il n'y a personne, mais l'impersonnel est là.
> Maurice Blanchot, *L'espace littéraire*

La fixation volontaire de Samuel Beckett sur le monde intérieur – microcosme à l'écart du macrocosme conventionnel – a, en fait, contribué à sa liberté de création. Il est hors de doute qu'à partir de *L'innommable* ses écrits se morcellent et que ses personnages deviennent anonymes. Mais cette tendance ne signifie pas l'épuisement de l'énergie de l'auteur. Car les œuvres de cette époque s'engendrent au cours d'arrangements répétitifs. Beckett a formé ses œuvres pour montrer qu'elles n'ont aucune forme. La preuve en est que le microcosme devient de plus en plus entassé: les multiples 'je' qui parlent dans la tête du 'je' de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* sont de bons exemples. D'ailleurs, dès que Beckett quitte la primo-rédaction en langue maternelle (*Murphy* et *Watt*), il ajoute davantage d'expressions et de réécritures expérimentales. Cette tendance nous indique qu'il devient plus libre de son identité *a priori* et que celle-ci se mêle à ses écritures qui sont en train de renaître. Dans *L'innommable* et les *Textes pour rien*, il a donc

réussi à faire surgir le sujet hypothétique de la conscience intérieure, grâce à l'intensification de l'introspection.

Une introspection vitale

Dans *L'innommable* et dans les *Textes pour rien*, une tendance à la contradiction et à la pluralité des sujets apparaît plus forte que dans *Molloy* et dans *Malone meurt*: "Mon disparu à moi, là à côté de moi, [...], sous moi, nous sommes empilés" (1953, 156), et "nous sommes plus d'un on dirait, [...], unis pour la vie" (1958, 116). Ces phrases semblent adopter un ton plutôt catégorique malgré l'écart entre les éléments qu'elles énoncent. Comme nous le voyons dans les expressions telles que: "je suis obligé de parler" (1953, 8), "il fait remuer mes lèvres avec une ficelle" (1958, 171), "il n'y a personne et il y a quelqu'un" (1958, 205), les narrateurs de ces deux œuvres seraient comme manipulés par quelqu'un d'invisible. D'ailleurs, le titre *L'innommable* entremêle la certitude (l'article défini) et l'obscurité (l'anonymat de l'impossibilité de la nomination). À partir de ces exemples, nous pouvons supposer que l'essentiel de la création de l'auteur réside dans la narration qui concentre toutes les paroles disséminées dans les textes ("Pousser au besoin cette compression," 1953, 172). Même la voix d'un sujet unique est, dans le fond, un ensemble d'autres voix polyphoniques: "Ils disent tous en même temps la même chose précisément, mais avec un ensemble si parfait qu'on dirait une seule voix" (1953, 116).

Le narrateur se situe dans l'espace arbitraire qui lui donne la possibilité de devenir n'importe qui: "Que tout devienne noir, que tout devienne clair, que tout reste gris, c'est le gris qui s'impose, pour commencer, étant ce qu'il est, pouvant ce qu'il peut" (1953, 24). À cause de cette ambiguïté, certains critiques considèrent que *L'innommable* et les textes qui suivent représentent une impasse ou une désintégration: "Après *L'innommable*, Beckett entre dans une impasse romanesque [...]. Il a conscience que *L'innommable* l'a conduit au bord d'une complète désintégration" (Simon, 232). Cependant, le narrateur de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* est une simple tête en forme de boule qui parle en contenant une énergie concentrée comme celle d'un œuf:[1] "*Un œuf, un œuf moyen?* [...] Que je sois rond et dur, c'est tout ce qui importe" (1953, 31-32; je souligne). L'œuf, symbole de la potentialité, mélange tous les organes: l'œil, l'oreille ("l'œil se fait tirer l'oreille," 1953, 123), la bouche ("mes yeux ma bouche," 1958, 168), et l'anus ("son anus la bouche," 1958, 184). Cette boule peut parler même si elle est sourde-muette et les deux trous qui représentent les yeux sans

globes oculaires versent des "larmes" sans aucun sentiment. Ces larmes symbolisent les "mots" qui remplissent la conscience du 'je': "Je pleure aussi, sans discontinuer. C'est un flot ininterrompu, de mots et de larmes […], mes mots sont mes larmes" (1958, 167-68). Ces "mots" sont ensuite assimilés à la "merde" qui déborde de la bouche: "chiant sa vieille merde et la ravalant, reprise sur les babines" (1958, 184). Ces phrases nous invitent à assimiler les mots aux larmes et aux excréments qui débordent des bouches/yeux/anus. Les mots pour Beckett à cette époque sont précisément comme le liquide qui entre et sort sans entrave des trous. C'est pourquoi, dans *L'innommable*, les expressions étrangères aux fonctions humaines et communicables telles que "ce sont des mots," "peut-être," "comment dire," "je ne sais pas" se répètent. Il n'est donc pas possible d'incarner les personnages beckettiens dans des corps vivants. Ils sont dès le départ éloignés de tout sujet visible et idéologique. On ne peut discerner qu'un état mouvant de l'esprit apparaissant entre les écritures. C'est, comme le dit Julia Kristeva, un "dispositif" qui laisse s'épuiser les idéologies données à travers leurs confrontations: "Le texte (polyphonique) n'a pas d'idéologie propre, car il n'a pas de sujet (idéologique). Il est un *dispositif* où les idéologies s'exposent et s'épuisent dans leur confrontation" (20, souligné dans le texte).

L'équation je = la boule = l'espace clos de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* est ainsi le dispositif capable de nous faire penser, non pas à la pauvreté, mais bien au contraire, à la fertilité de l'esprit, à la multi-linéarité de la conscience intérieure. On pourrait citer en exemple l'"homme du sous-sol" de Dostoïevski qui est, selon Bakhtine, sujet d'une conscience préalablement disjointe du caractère et de la personnalité: "Non seulement l''homme du sous-sol' dissout en lui tous traits solides possibles de son portrait en faisant de ceux-ci un objet d'introspection, mais il n'a même plus ces traits, il n'a plus de définitions solides, on ne peut plus rien dire de lui, il est présent non en tant qu'homme de la vie mais comme sujet de sa conscience et de son utopie" (Bakhtine1970b, 61-62). Il n'a aucun but, aucune intention; la seule chose qui y apparaisse fortement, c'est l''intensité d'introspection' qui fait surgir les images. D'autre part, comme nous le voyons dans l'aperception kantienne, chaque sujet de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* dépasse la conscience du narrateur, et le percevant et le perçu se confondent: "Pour regarder dans la tête, pour essayer d'y voir, pour m'y chercher, pour y chercher quelqu'un," et "C'est une

image, dans ma tête [...], où tout dort, tout est mort, reste à naître, je ne sais pas" (1958, 145).

Il faut donc distinguer deux fonctions: celle des sujets flous qui se ressemblent à l'intérieur de la conscience; et celle du sujet programmateur qui, depuis un ailleurs, les regarde et les invite à la co-mutation. Son point de vue est exprimé plus nettement comme étant celui de Sirius: "Je me suis toujours su rond, [...], invisible peut-être, ou grand comme Sirius dans le Grand Chien" (1953, 31-32), et "malgré tout, où je passais et repassais l'inutile chemin, le sachant court, et doux, vu de Sirius" (1958, 162). "Grand comme Sirius" renvoie à *Micromégas* (1752), le célèbre conte philosophique de Voltaire qui lui aussi évoque un géant habitant Sirius, tout en insistant que la grandeur et la petitesse sont relatives: "Un des philosophes [...] apprit [à Micromégas] enfin qu'il y a des animaux qui sont pour les abeilles ce que les abeilles sont pour l'homme, ce que le Sirien lui-même était pour ces animaux si vastes dont il parlait, et ce que ces grands animaux sont pour d'autres substances devant lesquelles ils ne paraissent que comme des atomes" (122-23). L'appréciation de Bakhtine que *Micromégas* "se situe dans la même ligne fantastique d'évolution de la ménippée – celle qui rend étrange la vie terrestre" (1970a, 175), va probablement dans le même sens que le point de vue micro-macrocosmique que Beckett a cherché à adopter.[2]

De même, au cours de ses réécritures sur la base de son autocritique, Beckett a trouvé un point de vue supérieur comme celui de Sirius, qui n'appartient ni au moi ni à l'autre. Comme le dit Charles Juliet, "Fixé près de Sirius, son œil peut embrasser l'ensemble" (48), le 'je' dans l'œuvre de Beckett essaie d'intégrer "tout l'univers" avec sa propre aperception: "Tout l'univers est ici, avec moi, je suis l'air, les murs, l'emmuré, tout cède, s'ouvre, dérive, reflue, des flocons, je suis tous ces flocons, se croisant, s'unissant, se séparant, où que j'aille je me retrouve, m'abandonne, vais vers moi, viens de moi, jamais que moi, qu'une parcelle de moi" (1953, 166). *L'innommable* contient les personnages précédents tels que Murphy, Mercier, Camier, Molloy, Moran, Malone. L'essentiel réside dans la renaissance carnavalesque de ces personnages spectraux à l'intérieur du 'moi-innommable.'

Le point de vue micro-macrocosmique n'a pas besoin d'un œil physique car l'important réside dans l'esprit séparé du corps humain comme nous le voyons dans les phrases: "il sera question de mon âme" (1958, 149), et "l'âme étant notoirement à l'abri des ablations et délabrements" (1953, 73). Ce point de vue montre moins la perte qu'il

n'exprime la possibilité d'une liberté. D'ailleurs, au début de *L'innommable*, le 'je' existe comme 'je-hypothétique' écarté du monde réel, et ses voix sont séparées de la bouche. De la même manière que ces voix, la récurrence de l'image des spectres pourrait être considérée comme un effet de surgissement issu de l'intensité introspective.

L'omniprésence des sujets absents

Dans *L'innommable* et les *Textes pour rien*, le temps ne s'écoule pas. Avec la répétition de 'maintenant' renvoyant à l'omni-présent, tous les lieux ou tous les sujets se confondent. En général, l'expression "maintenant, je suis ici" nous aide à nous positionner dans un certain endroit, mais ce court moment s'efface aussitôt qu'il se manifeste: 'maintenant' ne coïncide jamais exactement avec lui-même. Il n'est donc pas aisé de prolonger notre conscience actuelle. Cette difficulté apparaît également dans les textes de Beckett. Ainsi, la deuxième question de l'incipit de *L'innommable* ne se trouve pas dans le manuscrit olographe de 1949-50: les "Où maintenant? Qui maintenant?" de la version manuscrite ne devenant "Où maintenant? *Quand maintenant*? Qui maintenant?" que par la suite (1953, 7; je souligne). Par rapport aux deux autres questions, le "Quand maintenant?" donne une impression étrange, puisque l'adverbe interrogatif est suivi d'un adverbe pouvant répondre à la question qu'il introduit. Beckett a probablement distingué ce 'maintenant' de la notion du temps général en utilisant efficacement les décalages de son écriture. Dans les manuscrits des autres textes, il a souvent ajouté des répétitions afin d'introduire des décalages mouvants au sein des écritures statiques. *L'innommable* montre davantage de réécritures ajoutées entre les expressions répétitives. Comparons, "Dire je, sans le penser. *En avant.* Des questions, des hypothèses, *ça fait partir, ça fait continuer*," du manuscrit de 1949-50, avec la version publiée, "Dire je. Sans le penser. *Appeler ça* des questions, des hypothèses. *Aller de l'avant, appeler ça aller, appeler ça de l'avant*" (1953, 7, je souligne).[3] Nous remarquons d'abord que le rythme des phrases est changé et ensuite que les commentaires intercalés dans la version manuscrite servent le mouvement, tandis que dans la version ultérieure, les "appeler ça" non seulement interrompent le discours mais mettent le mouvement en question.

L'expression des *Textes pour rien*: "Et maintenant ici, quel maintenant ici, une énorme seconde, comme au paradis" (1958, 125) montre que le "maintenant-ici" beckettien contient des temps divers et infinis. Cet espace-temps est comme le cadre souple en permanente transforma-

tion sous l'effet du mouvement des sujets qui y sont inclus. Dans l'exemple suivant, Molloy porte le chapeau de Malone, personnage de son avenir: "C'est peut-être Molloy, portant le chapeau de Malone" (1953, 10). Ce Malone devient ensuite en quelque sorte la future image du 'je': "Un jour viendra-t-il où Malone passera devant là où j'avais été?" (1953, 10) Ainsi les personnages ne cessent de se succéder dans ce 'maintenant' en dehors du temps chronologique où la naissance suit la mort et non pas l'inverse: le temps "des morts à naître" (1953, 171). D'ailleurs, le 'maintenant' dans son œuvre signifie les instants innombrables au cours desquels coïncident des notions incompatibles. Logiquement, si nous essayons de suivre un seul phénomène, le 'maintenant' se présente sans interruption, sans voir le temps qui s'écoule du présent au passé. Le futur et le passé ne peuvent pas être quittés par la conscience du sujet qui les rappelle, alors qu'ils restent toujours dans le 'maintenant.' Ce n'est donc pas l'ordre du temps qui contient ce 'maintenant,' bien au contraire, c'est l'ordre de ce dernier qui contient le temps.

À travers le lien avec les 'je' = autrui qui résident à l'intérieur du 'je-hypothétique,' les troisièmes personnes et les noms des personnages qui sont apparus dans les derniers ouvrages se situent dans une possibilité de coexistence: "lui, c'est lui qui le dit, ou c'est eux qui le disent, [...] non, un seul, celui qui a vécu, ou qui a vu des ayant vécu, c'est lui qui parle de moi, comme si j'étais lui, comme si je n'étais pas lui, [...] il me sent en lui, alors il dit je, comme si j'étais lui, ou dans un autre, alors il dit Murphy, ou Molloy, je ne sais plus, comme si j'étais Malone" (1953, 194-95). On considère habituellement cette situation comme le clivage *a posteriori* du 'je.' Or comme nous l'avons vu, chez Beckett, l'origine ou le principe d'identité d'un sujet n'existe pas. Il y a, en revanche, des sujets préalablement multiples qui existent dans un "monde possible." Selon Deleuze et Guattari, "Il y a plusieurs sujets parce qu'il y a autrui, non pas l'inverse." Puis, en cherchant à découvrir en quoi consiste "la position d'autrui," ils expliquent: "Autrui n'apparaît ici ni comme un sujet ni comme un objet, mais, ce qui est très différent, comme un monde possible, comme la possibilité d'un monde effrayant. Ce monde possible n'est pas réel, ou ne l'est pas encore, et pourtant n'en existe pas moins" (1991, 22).

Dans *L'innommable*, le 'je-hypothétique' envisage de "Parler d'un monde à moi, dit aussi intérieur, sans m'étrangler" (1953, 173), ou il assimile ses personnages aux astres mouvants subissant et exerçant une attraction les uns sur les autres: "[Malone] tourne, je le sens, et autour

de moi, *comme la planète autour de son soleil*. [...] Il est également possible [...] que je sois moi aussi emporté dans un mouvement perpétuel, accompagné de Malone, *comme la terre de sa lune*" (1953, 13-14; je souligne). Si nous développons le point de vue d'un "mouvement perpétuel" cosmique, les 'je' dans la conscience intérieure d'un 'je' chez Beckett peuvent être considérés comme des atomes qui sont originellement anonymes et impersonnels, et demeurent dans l'univers qui se trouve au-delà de la vie et de la mort. Ils n'ont aucun lien avec la puissance *a priori* et ne s'occupent que de leurs 'décalages' et de leur 'disposition': "Je le savais, nous serions cent qu'il nous faudrait être cent et un" (1953, 87), et "Ils seraient x qu'on aurait besoin d'un x-et-unième" (1953, 132). Les nombreux 'je' et 'autrui' de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* restent donc tous dans le *nowhere* (nulle part) = *now-here* (ici-maintenant) qui n'a aucun lien avec le temps linéaire progressant vers le futur.

À la fin de *L'innommable*, le 'je-hypothétique' nous invite à constater que toutes les histoires déjà racontées n'appartiennent jamais à personne: "moi je n'ai jamais parlé, j'ai l'air de parler, c'est parce qu'il dit je comme si c'était moi, [...] tout ça c'est des hypothèses, je n'ai rien dit, quelqu'un n'a rien dit" (1953, 195-96). Le sujet, qui garde le silence tout en parlant, sait que sa narration ne sera pas crue, car le texte littéraire, selon Umberto Eco, s'accompagne d'un "contrat mutuel de méfiance" avec le lecteur:

> Le texte est dominé par la première personne du singulier (le narrateur) qui, à tout instant, souligne le fait que quelqu'un, étranger à la fabula, est en train de raconter, avec une distance ironique, des événements dont il n'est pas nécessaire qu'on les considère comme vrais. Ces interventions pesantes du sujet de l'énonciation stipulent indirectement [...] un *contrat mutuel de méfiance courtoise*: "Vous ne croyez pas à ce que je vous raconte et je sais que vous n'y croyez pas [...]."
>
> (258-59; je souligne)

Dans *L'innommable*, pourtant, Beckett s'attaque aux conventions d'un tel contrat par les interventions du 'je' narrateur qui prend ses distances et des 'je' qui énoncent et des 'je' énoncés et de tout ce qu'ils racontent: ils n'y croient pas plus que le lecteur.

Deux rôles existent en général chez tout écrivain: le lecteur qui conclut un contrat, et celui qui écrit (le dernier étant soumis à la censure

du premier). L'essentiel réside, non pas dans le message de l'auteur au lecteur, mais dans leur dialogue selon ce contrat mutuel. En mettant le contrat entre auteur et lecteur en question, Beckett serait assimilable au *procedural author* de Janet H. Murray, celui qui décide de la relation entre le monde supposé et le monde potentiel, et qui construit les possibilités de la narration:

> Procedural authorship means writing the rules by which the texts appear as well as writing the texts themselves. [...] It means establishing the properties of the objects and potential objects in the virtual world and the formulas for how they will relate to one another. The procedural author creates not just a set of scenes but a world of narrative possibilities.

> Être auteur procédural signifie écrire les règles selon lesquelles les textes apparaissent et en même temps écrire les textes eux-mêmes. [...] Cela veut dire établir les propriétés des objets et des objets potentiels dans le monde virtuel et les formules selon lequelles ils seront reliés les uns aux autres. L'auteur procédural produit non seulement un ensemble de scènes mais un monde de possibilités narratives.

> (152-53; je traduis)

C'est ainsi qu'au milieu de *L'innommable*, le 'je' essaie de mettre, à l'intérieur du monologue, la troisième personne à la place de la première: "Je ne dirai plus moi. [...] Je mettrai à la place, chaque fois que je l'entendrai, la troisième personne, si j'y pense" (1953, 114). Le monologue qui contient la troisième personne suscite un moi absent mais intense. De même que Bakhtine "prospecte le 'je' qui parle dans le roman, mais pour constater qu'*il n'y en a pas*" (Kristeva, 14; souligné dans le texte), Beckett représente l'intensité du 'je' absent à travers les dialogues entre les multiples 'je.' L'acte de différenciation des écritures et des notions dans la conscience intérieure aide Beckett à retrouver sans cesse le 'je' reconductible.

Il serait donc nécessaire de penser les histoires de *L'innommable* et des *Textes pour rien* comme des entités transformables, réversibles et dotées de sujets absents. Grâce à l'intensification de l'introspection, le sujet hypothétique surgit de la conscience intérieure du narrateur. C'est un processus d'agrandissement des possibilités de dialogues entre les sujets multiples, entre les pronoms personnels qui sont non-personnels

et les monologues qui ne sont pas monologiques. Avec un système équilibré sur la base de sa propre limite et de sa propre discipline, Beckett pouvait librement disposer ses multiples sujets. Le microcosme beckettien invite paradoxalement à la liberté grâce à une parfaite clôture.

Notes

1.   Deleuze recourt aussi à la symbolique de l'œuf à propos du corps sans organe: "Le corps sans organes est un œuf: il est traversé d'axes et de seuils, de latitudes, de longitudes, de géodésiques, il est traversé de gradients qui marquent les devenirs et les passages, les destinations de celui qui s'y développe. [...] Rien que des bandes d'intensité, des potentiels, des seuils et des gradients" (1972, 26).

2.   Bien qu'il soit difficile de savoir avec certitude si Beckett a lu *Micromégas*, sa mention de *Candide* comme d'ailleurs d'autres œuvres de Voltaire et son amour des étoiles nous permettent de le supposer (cf. Knowlson, 66, 80, 569).

3.   Les mots en italique indiquent les transformations d'un état du texte à un autre.

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WITNESSING

BEARING WITNESS IN *HOW IT IS*

Russell Smith

A central preoccupation of *How It Is* is the act of bearing witness: "I say it as I hear it." Readings of the novel turn on whether the text ultimately bears witness to the presence of alterity or cancels it in a final claim of absolute aesthetic autonomy. Here I draw out the text's relationship to two contrasting paradigms of witnessing: the theological paradigm exemplified by Dante's *Comedy* and the secular paradigm formulated by Giorgio Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. I argue that the text's paratactic structure, pronominal indeterminacy and ambiguous negations bear out Agamben's secular paradigm of bearing witness.

1. The Witness

"A witness I'd need a witness" (19) says the voice murmuring in the mud of Samuel Beckett's *How It Is*. Why does this voice need a witness? The simplest answer is, in order to transform verbal expression into written text: "recorded none the less it's preferable somehow somewhere as it stands as it comes my life my moments not the millionth part all lost nearly all someone listening another noting or the same" (7).

The role of the witness – a recurrent theme in Beckett's work – is here divided into two functions: listener and noter. Although seemingly complementary, the two roles can be seen as corresponding to two paradigms of witnessing, one logical, materialist; the other theological, metaphysical. For the scribe is necessary, in a logical, materialist sense, to explain the existence of the text. Thus Molloy, Moran and Malone all draw attention to their own acts of writing, and even the Unnamable feels compelled to point out that "It is I who write, who cannot raise my hand from my knee" (Beckett 1958, 17). But the listener is necessary, in a theological, metaphysical sense, to guarantee the existence, not of the text, but of the speaker, in a version of Bishop Berkeley's *Esse est*

percipi – to be is to be perceived – where God is the infinite mind perceiving all.

But it is "*I'd* need a witness" – conditional tense. To what extent is the role of the witness, both listener and scribe, 'necessary' in *How It Is*? After all, having expressed the need for a witness, the narrator creates and discards a series of witness figures: he invents a witness Kram and a scribe Krim (88) and a series of "blue yellow and red" notebooks (90), but these notebooks are soon collapsed back into "one big book and everything there" (92), just as Kram and Krim are eventually collapsed back into the single figure of Kram: "Kram alone one is enough Kram alone witness and scribe" (145). Kram too is disposed of (146) but the narrator is then forced, "if we are to be possible" (150), to posit the existence of a quasi-divine being "who listens to himself and who when he lends his ear to our murmur does no more than lend it to a story of his own devising" (151). Finally the whole series of witness figures is disposed of as "all balls": "all this business […] of an ear listening to me yes a care for me yes an ability to note yes all that all balls yes Krim and Kram yes all balls yes" (159)[1].

Essentially there are two ways of reading the final pages of *How It Is*. If we take the narrator at his word here, then the entire text – Krim, Kram, Bim, Bom and the others – has been nothing more than figments created and discarded by a solitary imagination. This is more or less the position of Raymond Federman, Frederik N. Smith, Gary Adelman and others. From this perspective, *How It Is*, with its creation and decreation of a world through linguistic fiat, is understood through a theological paradigm, with the narrator as author/God bearing witness to his own creation.

The other way is to take this final negation as no more determining than any of the others that precede it, and to read the text as enacting, at the narrator's level, a move beyond the solipsism of the trilogy and the *Texts for Nothing*, towards the appearance of alterity, where the relationship "before Pim with Pim after Pim" takes on the character of an event, an encounter with the Other. This is the reading proposed in various forms by Leo Bersani and Ulysse Dutoit, Ewa Ziarek, Alain Badiou and others. Here the text is understood through the secular, materialist paradigm of testimony, of bearing witness to alterity. According to Alain Badiou, *How It Is* marks a "major transformation" in Beckett's writing that "attempts to ground itself in completely different categories […] above all, the category of alterity, of the encounter and the figure of the Other" (16).

In this paper I wish to consider the issue of alterity in *How It Is* with a focus, not on the Pim-Bom relationship, but on the figure of the witness and the narrator's apparent attempts to cancel or deny these witness figures. First, I wish to develop further the text's relationship to these two contrasting paradigms of witnessing: the theological paradigm exemplified by Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the secular paradigm as formulated by Giorgio Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz*. Then I will consider the problem of the final negations of *How It Is* and argue why I think it should be taken as an exploration of the problematic of bearing witness to alterity rather than as an exercise in autonomous linguistic creation.

2. Authorship and Testimony in Dante

An often-noted intertextual source for *How It Is* is canto 7 of Dante's *Inferno*, the fifth Circle of Hell, where the Wrathful are confined in a sea of mud. In particular the image of a figure face down in the mud murmuring about his "life above in the light" cannot but recall the following passage (*Inferno* 7.115-26):[2]

> The good master said, "Son, you see now the souls of those whom anger overcame; and I would also have you know for certain that down under the water are people who sigh and make it bubble at the surface, as your eye tells you wherever it turns. Fixed in the slime they say, 'We were sullen in the sweet air that is gladdened by the sun, bearing within us the sluggish fumes; now we are sullen in the black mire.' This hymn they gurgle in their throats, for they cannot speak it in full words [*parola integra*]."

Here Virgil transforms into *parola integra* or 'full words' the inaudible speech of the damned, the only signs of whose presence are the bubbles on the surface of the mud. In other words, Virgil speaks not as a witness but as an authority, for he quotes the words of the hymn without actually hearing them, conferring certainty and truthfulness upon a scene that Dante on his own would not be capable of interpreting correctly. Truth is not perceived, it is pronounced: as Daniela Caselli argues, "repetition and reproduction confer the status of reality upon invisibility [and inaudibility]" (156).

Thus it is Virgil, rather than the damned themselves, who enables Dante to perform the role of witness and scribe. Significantly, no question is raised concerning the accuracy of Virgil's transmission of the

inaudible hymn of the damned; as Neal Oxenhandler argues, "There is no epistemological doubt in the *Commedia*" (217). Instead, Virgil's authority guarantees the truth of Dante's vision, and thus, as Caselli points out, Dante's self-definition in the role of a scribe taking dictation is "both a declaration of humility and of supreme authority" (174). If the role of Dante as witness and scribe is simply to "say it as I hear it," in the case of the hymn of the damned beneath the mud, whom Dante can neither see nor hear, it is the mediating role of Virgil as authority that guarantees a unitary truth.

In *How It Is*, on the other hand, there is no authority, no epistemological certainty. Instead, Beckett divides and multiplies each of the positions of speaker, listener and scribe, blurring the relations between quotation, source and origin in a way that, I will argue, is much closer to the nature of testimony as a paradigm of truth.

First, the voice begins by claiming that its entire speech is a quotation: "how it was I quote before Pim with Pim after Pim how it is three parts I say it as I hear it" (7). The absence of punctuation is significant here, since there is nothing to indicate whether the words "I quote" are an aside by the speaker, or whether they are part of the quoted text, in which case they lead to an infinite regression. The indeterminacy of the referent of the pronoun 'I,' whether it is spoken in person or merely quoted second-hand, destabilises the unity and coherence of the speaking subject, which may, or may not, be radically divided from itself. Indeed, this indeterminacy is interiorised as "scraps of an ancient voice in me not mine" (7).

So too, where Virgil was able to reconstitute the hymn of the damned as *parola integra*, here the speaker notes that there are "losses everywhere" such that what he quotes is "what remains bits and scraps" (7), and what is noted is even less: "one word every three two words every five" (95).

Thirdly, the authority of the text is further undermined through the many potential sources of error in the transmission of a speech that is "ill-said ill-heard ill-recaptured ill-murmured in the mud" (7).

Thus the formula "I say it as I hear it," despite its apparent commitment to truth, instead draws our attention to the impossibility of authoritative statement: the result will not be the *parola integra* of Virgil's authoritative rendering, but "ill-heard ill-murmured ill-heard ill-recorded my whole life a gibberish garbled sixfold" (146).

3. Agamben's Model of Authorship and Testimony

At this point I wish to turn to a second model of witnessing, that outlined by Giorgio Agamben in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*. The central figure in Agamben's analysis is the *Muselmann*, a word used in the Auschwitz concentration camp to refer to those whom suffering and exhaustion had brought to "the extreme threshold between life and death" (Agamben, 47), where they had lost the power of speech and the capacity to respond to their experience. Primo Levi, in his memoir *The Drowned and the Saved*, argues that only the Muselmann could be a "complete witness" of the camp, but the Muselmann cannot speak or write, indeed cannot even see or hear: "Even if they had paper and pen, the drowned would not have testified because their death had begun before that of their body. Weeks and months before being snuffed out, they had already lost the ability to observe, to remember, to compare and express themselves. We speak in their stead, by proxy" (83-84). This is what Agamben calls Levi's paradox: "how can the true witness be the one who by definition cannot bear witness?" (Agamben, 82)

Agamben's argument turns on the relation between the *Muselmänner* and the survivors who bear witness, between those whose experiences have deprived them even of the capacity to experience their fate (54), and those who escaped this fate and who therefore cannot be true witnesses, who essentially have nothing to say. For Agamben, it is just this "impossibility of speaking" (120) that unites the survivor and the *Muselmann*. To explicate this relation, Agamben turns to the etymology of the term 'author,' arguing that the original sense of the Latin *auctor* was as a kind of sponsor, a person who gives legal authority to the incomplete act of a minor, or person otherwise incapable of a legally valid act (148). Testimony, then, depends on this sense of 'authorship' as sponsorship of an incomplete act of speaking: the *auctor* is not the one who speaks, but the one who is unable to speak:

> Testimony takes place where the speechless one makes the speaking one speak and where the one who speaks bears the impossibility of speaking in his own speech, such that the silent and the speaking […] enter into a zone of indistinction in which it is impossible to establish the position of the subject, to identify the 'imagined substance' of the 'I' and, along with it, the true witness.
>
> (Agamben, 120)

In Agamben's account, the witness can only bear witness to the impossibility of bearing witness: the testimony of the *Muselmann* will always be missing, just as the testimony of the survivor will always be incomplete. 'Authorship' thus characterises this paradoxical act of enunciation, in which the one who bears witness and the one who cannot speak are united in the double figure of testimony: "*The authority of the witness consists in his capacity to speak solely in the name of an incapacity to speak*" (158, emphasis in original).

Thus, whereas in Dante's model, authority resides in Virgil, who transforms into full words the inarticulate gurgling of those who have been drowned in the mud, in *How It Is* the authority of testimony paradoxically resides in these two failures of epistemological certainty: in the "indistinction" that characterises the "'imagined substance' of the 'I'" (Agamben, 120) and in the fragmentariness of the speech itself, its status as "what remains bits and scraps" (Beckett 1964, 7).

4. Alterity in *How It Is*

As we have seen, the question of the status of the other in *How It Is* – whether it can be read as a text that admits alterity or excludes it – turns on the weight one attributes to its final words, where the narrator asserts that everything to this point, including the existence of Pim and Bom, Krim and Kram, and of the voice "once without […] then in me," has been "all balls from start to finish" and that there has been "only one voice here yes mine yes" (158). This interpretive decision is ultimately about whether the text portrays a self-referential invention or a testimony to the presence of alterity.

Ewa Ziarek argues that Beckett criticism has tended to read it as the former: "Paradoxically, the text, which stages almost obsessively a violent clash between the signification of alterity and the rationality inherent in communication, between the shock of otherness and absorption of this shock within a discursive community, has been read almost exclusively within the paradigms of self-expression or self-referential language" (171). She argues that the paratactic nature of the text in *How It Is* – its "little blurts midget grammar" (Beckett 1964, 84) – signals a rupture in the fabric of representation, an attempt to admit what representation excludes, a trace of "what remains outside of both representation and aesthetic synthesis" (169). Thus the "rhetorical effects of parataxis […] expose a signification of alterity incommensurate with the coherence of discourse" (173). Or, to recall Dante, the paratactic nature of the text in *How It Is* might be seen as attempting to record

faithfully the gurgling incoherence of the hymn of damned rather than translating it into the *parola integra* of aesthetic synthesis.

We should remember, however, that *parataxis* refers to "the placing of propositions or clauses one after another, without indicating by connecting words the relation (*of co-ordination or subordination*) between them" (*Oxford English Dictionary*; emphasis added). That is, parataxis signifies not just an absence of horizontal, co-ordinating relations between propositions, but also an absence of vertical, hierarchical relations. In other words, it blurs the boundaries between levels of discourse, such that in a paratactic text (Eliot's *Waste Land* is a prime example) it is impossible to distinguish decisively between what is said and what is quoted, between he who speaks and he who is spoken, between the diegetic levels of a narrative that is "a gibberish garbled sixfold" (Beckett 1964, 146). The effect of parataxis is precisely to open up Agamben's "zone of indistinction" between speech and origin that constitutes the authority of testimony.

But if *How It Is* allows us to read it as a text that seeks, through its paratactical rhetoric, to open a space for alterity to appear without being submitted to aesthetic or representational synthesis, it also allows us to read it an entirely opposite way, as a text that seeks absolute integration, unity and univocity. Indeed, as Shane Weller points out, if one takes the novel's final "apocalyptic negation" as definitive and decisive, rather than simply one in a series of failed attempts to say "how it is," then the final section of the text appears to set out a version of "how it is" with which no fault is found: "good good end at last of part three and last that's how it was end of quotation after Pim how it is" (160).

As Weller comments, if one is to take the speaker at his word here, then, "With the absolute reduction of all alterity, with the complete identification of dictated and dictating being, the 'comfort' provided by all those disintegratively projected others may have been lost […], but in that comfort's place there would be truth and absolute self-presence. Utterance would at last have achieved its end, speaking the truth of being" (167). But, as Weller goes on to argue, the text gives us no warrant to do this; it is ultimately impossible to determine whether the text is an affirmation or a negation alterity; whether it produces an absolute aesthetic synthesis in which alterity is subsumed and thus annihilated; or whether, by contrast, this synthesis is contaminated by the presence of an irreducible remainder, "that which resists such integration" (195). To "decide" the text one way or another, to enforce a

univocal reading when the text itself is equivocal, would itself be un-
ethical, would be to "cut into the text as the 'I' cuts into Pim's body"
(195).

However, I believe there are some reasons why we might con-
clude that *How It Is* is constructed on the model of witnessing rather
than authority, alterity rather than identity. Let's look closely at one of
the final "apocalyptic negations" that apparently confirms the solitari-
ness of the narrator:

> alone in the mud yes the dark yes sure yes panting yes someone
> hears me no no one hears me no murmuring sometimes yes when
> the panting stops yes not at other times no in the mud yes to the
> mud yes my voice yes mine yes not another's no mine alone yes
> sure yes when the panting stops yes on and off yes a few words
> yes a few scraps yes that no one hears no but less and less no an-
> swer LESS AND LESS yes

> (160)

By this point the only things that are affirmed are the dark and the mud,
the panting and the murmuring. Significantly, there is no mention of the
"means to note," which leads to the conclusion that there must be a
scribe to produce the text, and thus the narrator's attempt to deny the
existence of the witness is belied by the existence of the text itself.

So too, it is surely more than ironic that this catalogue of nega-
tions is given in the form of a dialogue, so that alterity is written back
even into the structure of the narrator's claim to solitary autonomous
creation. Indeed, although it is never clear who answers the narrator's
questions, in the penultimate paragraph the interrogation is raised to a
pitch of intensity that suggests it is not simply an interior dialogue but a
violent encounter with an irreducible alterity: "I MAY DIE screams I
SHALL DIE screams good" (160).

Finally, if we look more closely at these negations – "someone
hears me no no one hears me no" – the second 'no' is, literally, am-
biguous. One interpretation would assert that, in each case, 'no' means
'no': both statements – "someone hears me" and "no one hears me" –
are stated to be untrue. This violates logic, of course, in which case we
would have to reinterpret the second 'no' as in fact confirming the
negative of the second statement: 'no, indeed, no one hears you.' In
other words, the second 'no' functions as a 'yes.' The same effect is
repeated in a second passage – "a few scraps yes that no one hears no"

– where it is uncertain whether the second statement is confirmed or denied: 'no, no one hears' or 'no, on the contrary, someone hears.' Where a 'yes' would be decisive, a 'no' is ambiguous, collapsing the stability of language's most fundamental binary.

The insistently repeated yesses and noes at the end of *How It Is* have often been seen as an inverted homage to the resoundingly affirmative conclusion of Molly Bloom's soliloquy in *Ulysses*. What complicates this homage, of course, is that a double negation is an affirmation, two noes make a yes, and the novel's final catechism of cancellations for this reason fails definitively to rule out alterity. The narrator's demand for clarification, enacted by repeating the question in the negative – "no one hears me no" – has the opposite effect, producing an indeterminacy in which the possibility of alterity is affirmed through double negation.

The truth-status of Dante's *Comedy* rests on the attribution of the witness's authority to a fictional text; in Charles Singleton's famous phrase, "the fiction is that there is no fiction" (90). By contrast, the narrator of *How It Is* claims that his narrative is all a fiction: "all this business […] of an ear listening to me yes a care for me yes an ability to note yes all that all balls yes Krim and Kram yes all balls yes" (159). However, the paratactic ambiguity of the text, the "indistinction" of the speaking subject, and the indeterminacy of its final negations, suggest that this claim, too, is "all balls," and that its fiction of autonomy is irremediably disturbed by the presence of alterity. What the text requires, but cannot provide, is what the narrator of the eleventh of the *Texts for Nothing* dreams of: "a new no, to cancel all the others […] a new no that none says twice" (Beckett 1995, 147).

Notes

1   The phrase "Krim and Kram yes all balls yes" accentuates Beckett's pun on the German *krimkram*=junk (Cohn, 237).

2.   Beckett transferred lines 121-24, the hymn of the damned, into early notebooks including the *Whoroscope* notebook (Caselli, 154).

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BECKETT'S LEGACY IN THE WORK
OF J. M. COETZEE

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Beckett has been one of the most important authors for J. M. Coetzee and his influence is clearly felt in Coetzee's novels. In this paper, I aim to reconsider the relation between modernism and postcolonialism by examining how Beckett's (modernist) legacy is inherited by Coetzee's (postcolonial) novels.

It is well known that Samuel Beckett has been one of the most important authors for J. M. Coetzee. His Ph.D. thesis was a stylistic analysis of Beckett's early novels, and he has written a number of critical essays on Beckett. He is one of the patrons of the Beckett International Foundation. Moreover, Beckett's influence is clearly felt in many of his novels. In one interview, Coetzee says of Beckett:

> Beckett has meant a great deal to me in my own writing – that must be obvious. He is a clear influence on my prose. […] The essays I wrote on Beckett's style aren't only academic exercises, in the colloquial sense of that word. They are also attempts to get closer to a secret, a secret of Beckett's that I wanted to make my own. And discard, eventually, as it is with influences.
>
> (1992, 25)

What Coetzee means by Beckett's secret is unclear, but in this paper I wish to approach it by examining the way Beckett's work might be thought to have been rewritten and reworked in Coetzee's work. In the process I will reconsider some aspects of modernism that have come to be highlighted when the legacy of modernism has been inherited by later authors. First of all, however, I want to examine how the young Coetzee encountered Beckett's work.

After obtaining degrees in English and mathematics at the University of Cape Town, Coetzee decided to leave his country, the political and social disorder of which had made him anxious about his future. In 1962, when he was twenty-one, he went to London to work as a com-

puter programmer. Making use of a third-person pronoun, Coetzee describes his literary interests at this period in an interview: "In his juvenile writings he follows in the steps of Anglo-American modernism at its most hermetic. He immerses himself in Pound's *Cantos*. He admires Hugh Kenner above other critics" (1992, 393). In the memoir-fiction *Youth* which covers this period, there is a much fuller account of this orientation. T. S. Eliot and then Ezra Pound taught him to prepare for the life of the artist, "even if that means exile, obscure labor and obloquy" (20). He thought of the *Cantos* as the subject of his M.A. thesis, but because he did not know Chinese, he chose Ford Madox Ford's novels instead (2003, 53). Toward the end of *Youth*, however, the narrator experiences a decisive encounter with Beckett's *Watt*, in which he discovered what he had long wanted: "*Watt* is quite unlike Beckett's plays. There is no clash, no conflict, just the flow of a voice telling a story, a flow continually checked by doubts and scruples, its pace fitted exactly to the pace of his own mind." The narrator then asks himself, "How could he have imagined he wanted to write in the manner of Ford when Beckett was around all the time?" (155).

In 1965, Coetzee entered the University of Texas as a postgraduate student in order to study a field that synthesized linguistics, mathematics, and textual analysis (Coetzee 1992, 25-26). Curiously, he did not know of the collection of Beckett's manuscripts at that university until he went there. But he was destined to be drawn to them, those of *Watt* in particular, and began to work on a Ph.D. thesis entitled "The English Fiction of Samuel Beckett: An Essay in Stylistic Analysis," which he completed in 1968. It is a rigorously statistical and quantitative stylistic analysis of "Dante and the Lobster," *Murphy*, and *Watt*, and it carefully follows the genesis of *Watt*, making full use of the manuscripts. It struggles to develop a new methodology for stylistic analysis, and its scientific rigor, use of statistics, and unfamiliar charts pose enormous challenges to ordinary literary readers. Of course, given his career as a computer programmer, we should not be surprised at such features in his thesis. Some years later, Coetzee published an article in which he developed a computer analysis of Beckett's *Lessness*.

It is not difficult to understand that the peculiar style of *Watt* and Beckett's later prose works such as *Lessness* appealed to Coetzee's mathematical mind. But at a more general level, we could note the fact that he was originally interested in Anglo-American modernism, represented by Ezra Pound, and admired Hugh Kenner's criticism. It is probable that Hugh Kenner made it easier for Coetzee to move from Pound

to Beckett, because Kenner's view of modernism tends to take Beckett to be more or less continuous with earlier modernists such as Eliot, Pound, and Joyce. For Kenner, one of the defining features of modernism is the foregrounding of the unfamiliar otherness of words and language. Language ceases to be a transparent vehicle of meaning as in the case of the Victorian novels and begins to assert its own obscure materiality – a phenomenon that becomes conspicuous with Flaubert, a forefather of modernism. Kenner's lecture "Modernism and What Happened to It" (1987), which starts by nominating Beckett as the last modernist, typically argues, "One thing that was modern when Modernism was new was awareness of Language as a mode of human behaviour virtually unexplored. It was not, as it had been for Dickens, simply *there*; it required devoted attention" (99). In such a framework, the language of *Watt* can be regarded as a radical extension of the stylistic experiments of the earlier modernists. In one of the earliest critical works on Beckett, *The Stoic Comedians: Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett* (1962), which is referred to in Coetzee's Ph.D. thesis, Kenner had already pointed out the similarity between Beckett's style, Lewis Carroll's nonsense, and mathematical theories in terms of the concept of the game in a closed field, and much later, discussing writing and technology in Pound, Eliot, Joyce and Beckett in *The Mechanic Muse* (1987), Kenner more explicitly connected Beckett's writing to computer language. It could be argued that Coetzee's interest in *Watt* was to a certain extent continuous with his earlier interest in Pound and that the factor linking the two stages was the defamiliarization of language in modernism highlighted by Hugh Kenner.

As is often argued, this defamiliarization was more keenly felt and more effectively exploited by those coming from the peripheries of European culture – Ireland and the USA. Coetzee states that he was attracted to Ford because Ford, whose father was an anglicized German, wrote English as an outsider. The awareness of the otherness of English led Ford to be spare in his style in the manner of Flaubert who sought for *le mot juste*. Coetzee admits that when he himself writes, he also "quite laboriously search[es] out for the right word" (1992, 20). Indeed we feel a certain spareness or hardness reminiscent of Flaubert in Coetzee's style. For him too, English was not exactly his native tongue because his parents were Afrikaners though the family spoke English at home.

When we consider Beckett's influence on Coetzee's novels, however, we realize that a different perspective is necessary because, evi-

dently, Coetzee does not attempt any extreme experiments with lan-
guage in the manner of Beckett's *Watt*. In my view, Beckett's legacy
manifests itself more clearly in Coetzee's tenacious critique of story-
telling. There is no doubt that Beckett's work, particularly the trilogy,
radically questions the act of telling stories and therefore becomes self-
reflexive or meta-fictional. What does the act of telling stories mean for
life? Such an ontological question in his work often leads to the realiza-
tion that while we cannot comprehend the world or live normally with-
out resorting to storytelling, the stories we rely upon are often no more
than sheer lies. In Coetzee's case, this feature is particularly salient in
his experimental second novel, *In the Heart of the Country* (1977),
which is made up of 266 fragments depicting the female narrator
Magda's meandering fantasies concerning sexual and racial violence on
a South African farm. In her interior monologue, the narrator often
mentions the futility of using language, which she regards as deceptive
in the end. She even hears words in her head in a very Beckettian man-
ner. Yet in the next novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), this onto-
logical critique of storytelling develops itself and acquires ethical and
political dimensions. The narrator, the Magistrate of an imaginary Em-
pire, who is stationed on the border facing the barbarians' territories, is
confronted with ethical questions when he protects a barbarian girl who
was tortured by the officials of the Empire. He is sceptical of the Em-
pire's policy of capturing and torturing barbarians on the ungrounded
assumption that they are going to invade the Empire, and in the end, he
becomes a victim of torture as a political dissident. A Levinasian cri-
tique of what it means to comprehend the other emerges through his
one-to-one relation with the girl, and the violence inherent in containing
the other in one's own interpretive framework or one's own story is
foregrounded. This could be called an ethical critique of storytelling.
On the other hand, the Magistrate thinks that the history of the Empire
is nothing but a story and that the political conflict between the Empire
and himself is a conflict of different stories. Thus the violence of im-
posing stories on the other is addressed in the political sphere and a
political critique of storytelling is effected.

     With this in mind, let us turn to Coetzee's fourth novel, *Life &
Times of Michael K* (1983). This novel is set in an imaginary South
Africa afflicted with a civil war and social disorder. After his mother
dies of illness, the intellectually handicapped Michael K starts a journey
to her home town with her ashes, losing his possessions on the way.
Reaching the place that may or may not be her home, he starts cultivat-

ing land with some pleasure. Though he is aloof from worldly concerns, he is inevitably involved in the social situation around him, and he is soon put into a camp by the police. He is at the mercy of political authorities that impose identity and stories on him – he is misunderstood to be a servant, an alcoholic, a guerrilla and so on. In the second part, a doctor struggles to elicit a story from Michael K who eludes such an attempt like "a stone, a pebble that, having lain around quietly minding its own business since the dawn of time, is now suddenly picked up and tossed randomly from hand to hand" (135). In this way, the violence inherent in storytelling is questioned both ethically (in the one-to-one relation between the doctor and Michael K) and politically (in the political authorities' high-handed assumptions about his identity). Yet because K is completely dispossessed and powerless, he can function effectively as a kind of mirror to reveal the violence of storytelling.

We are struck by the similarities between this novel and Beckett's *Molloy*. The two novels have several factors in common: attachment to the mother, vagabondage in dispossession, aloofness from society and, most important, a critique of storytelling. Gilbert Yeoh is correct in arguing, in his thoroughgoing analysis of the similarities, that there is "no doubt that *Michael K* is, to a significant extent, a conscious rewriting of *Molloy*" (121). Michael K is indeed a Molloy placed in the fiercely political situation of South Africa. But whereas the unreliability of narration tends to be ontologically addressed in *Molloy*, *Michael K* appears to focus sharply on the political critique of storytelling, which is only latently presented in *Molloy,* as in the scene where Molloy eludes the policeman's interrogation of his identity. Another notable difference is that unlike *Molloy*, *Michael K* uses a third-person narrative except in the short second part consisting of the doctor's first-person account of K. The even shorter third part continues with the third-person narrative to recount K 's return to his mother's room. In my view, this is because if things were narrated from K's limited viewpoint, the efficacy of the political critique of storytelling would be seriously undermined. In order for K to function as a mirror to reflect the violence of storytelling, it is necessary to provide objective information about the social and political realities that cause K to be "tossed" around. But he himself is too ignorant of and indifferent to them to be entrusted with that role. On the other hand, if the entire novel were a third-person narrative, it would imply that K can be completely contained in a single narrative framework. The impression of this narrative containment, moreover, is further enhanced by the use of the past tense

in the first and third parts of the novel, which is exceptional in Coet-
zee's fiction. Yet, such an implication would be radically at variance
with K's fundamental elusiveness. Therefore, the second part is re-
quired in which the doctor, in his ethical relation with K, explicitly
ponders the impossibility of containing him in a story.

     There are important differences, however: set in a particular po-
litical context of South Africa, *Michael K* is far more culturally specific
than *Molloy*. It is a novel specifically 'about' South Africa, whereas we
cannot easily claim that *Molloy* is 'about' Ireland or France in the same
sense. The comparison between *Michael K* and *Molloy* thus illuminates
what could be called a universalist vein in the latter, which transcends
cultural particularism and addresses more universal human conditions.
In fact, it could be argued that Beckett's mature works are all colored
by the same tendency to universalism, which is shown most typically in
Waiting for Godot. The cosmopolitanism of this play, in which charac-
ters with Russian, French, Italian, and English names appear, has often
been noted. For example, Nadine Gordimer's following comment
represents the widely held view of Beckett's works such as *Godot*:

> Samuel Beckett takes on as his essential gesture a responsibility
> direct to human destiny, and not to any local cell of humanity. […]
> His place – not Warsaw, San Salvador, Soweto – has nothing spe-
> cific to ask of him. And unlike Joyce, he can never be in exile
> wherever he chooses to live, because he has chosen to be answer-
> able to the twentieth-century human condition which has its camp
> everywhere, or nowhere – whichever way you see Vladimir, Es-
> tragon, Pozzo and Lucky.
>
>   (297)

I would argue that this universalist quality is an imprint of European
modernism that germinated Beckett's art. Of course, I am aware that
many critics have emphasized the specifically Irish elements in
Beckett's works. Nonetheless, it seems undeniable that in his mature
works after the war, Beckett tried to downplay those elements. When
modernism flourished, Europe still powerfully asserted its cultural as-
cendancy over the rest of the world, though non-European cultures
encountered in its colonial expansion were beginning to have a deep
impact upon it. Or, more important, the interaction with other cultures
was so essential to European modernism that modernists were almost
pressed to stake out and assert universality. As decolonization pro-

ceeded in the course of the twentieth century, however, the age-old Eurocentric assumption that cultural products in Paris or London are more important and valuable for 'humanity' in general than those in, say, Tokyo, Beijing, and Tehran began to be questioned and gradually challenged.

Jed Esty has recently analyzed this process with regard to English modernism. He argues that universalism in English modernism, represented by T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* in the 1920s, was based on what Raymond Williams called the "metropolitan perception" in the metropolis characterized by the "magnetic concentration of wealth and power in imperial capitals and the simultaneous cosmopolitan access to a wide variety of subordinate cultures" (Williams, qtd. in Esty 3). In a word, the empire was the basis for universalism in English modernism. But as the empire shrank with decolonization, English modernism lost its impetus and was undermined in the 1930s and 1940s by the rise of culturalism that discovered the particularity of English culture.

France underwent decolonization in its own way, losing Indochina and Algeria after World War II. In 1961, when Jérôme Lindon and his Editions de Minuit were threatened after publishing documents about the use of torture by the French military in Algeria, Beckett eagerly supported the Manifesto by 121 signatories siding with Lindon, though he did not sign it because he could not risk his residential permit (Knowlson, 494-95).[1] Beckett was thus exposed to the painful process of France's decolonization. Generally speaking, however, Paris in the 1950s was still a centre of European culture that, unlike London, could keep universalist assumption relatively intact even after the heyday of modernism. Beckett's art flourished in this climate that enabled avant-garde experiments in novels and plays in the wake of pre-war European modernism.

Finally, I want to turn to Coetzee's lecture "What Is a Classic?" (originally delivered in 1991) to consider how modernism might be inherited by later authors in the age of postcolonialism. In its first part, Coetzee discusses T. S. Eliot's lecture on Virgil with the same title. Eliot argues that Western Europe constitutes a single civilization that originated in Rome and that Virgil's *Aeneid* is its founding classic. Coetzee detects in such an argument Eliot's compulsive attempt to redefine European culture. Eliot, who came to Europe from America, was so conscious of his origin as an arriviste that he was compelled to conceive of a new cosmopolitan definition of European culture that would

safely embrace him. Typically a product of a postcolonial standpoint, this 'sociocultural' reading of Eliot (as opposed to the 'transcendental-poetic' reading that respects Eliot's own aesthetic principle of transpersonal order in literature) discloses the colonial concern beneath the surface of the universalist claim in modernism. Indeed, it could be argued that artists from peripheries will more eagerly attempt to align themselves with the canonicity of European culture regarded as the forefront of 'human' culture in general. Samuel Beckett was of course no exception. With Pound, Eliot and Joyce, he shared the ambition to work with the whole European literature and philosophy from ancient Greek philosophy onwards (Dante in particular runs through all these four, Hugh Kenner's favorites).

　　Coetzee, who was influenced by Anglo-American modernists in his youth, is well aware that he is belatedly taking a similar position to theirs. He starts the second part of the lecture by giving an account of his experience of being spellbound by Bach's music when he happened to hear it as a teenager in South Africa. He then asks himself whether he was moved by power inherent in classics like Bach's music or whether he was "symbolically electing high European culture" that would enable him to escape from the unpalatable realities of his country: "In other words, was the experience what I understood it to be – a disinterested and in a sense impersonal aesthetic experience – or was it really the masked expression of a material interest?" (2002, 9). Coetzee does not answer this fascinating question directly, although in the end he is affirmative of the power of a classic to speak to us across the ages, which cannot be explained away by social and historical factors. Such power derives from surviving the process of testing for generations. As a South African author with aspiration for European high culture, Coetzee can easily discern 'sociocultural' motivation ("a material interest") in the major players of European modernism. But this insight that debunks the modernists' claim for universality seems to make him somewhat uneasy and induces him to work out the alternative 'transcendental-poetic' perspective.

　　It is certain that the Eurocentric (or universalist) assumption of modernism is no longer possible for later authors like Coetzee. We may argue that the cultural particularism in *Michael K* indicates an attempt by a South African author to appropriate *Molloy,* a novel that is tinged with the universalism of European modernism. In the age of postcolonialism that questions Eurocentricism, this might be a representative way Beckett's work is inherited by his successors.[2] The investigation of

language and literature, especially storytelling, continues, but now in a particular cultural context. In an interview, Coetzee says the following about *Michael K* and Kafka, whose work provides another subtext of the novel:

> There is no monopoly on the letter K; or to put it in another way, it is as much possible to center the universe on the town of Prince Albert in the Cape Province as Prague. *Equally* – and the moment in history has perhaps come at which this must be said – it is as much possible to center the universe on Prague as on Prince Albert. Being an out-of-work gardener in Africa in the late twentieth century is no *less*, but also no *more*, central a fate than being a clerk in Hapsburg Central Europe.
>
> (1992, 199)

Kafka's K and Beckett's Molloy can thus be placed in Prince Albert with no problem. Coetzee is presenting a neatly deconstructive move. First, there is a subversion of the center by the periphery, and then an invalidation of the binary opposition itself. Not only Prague but also Paris and London would be no different from Prince Albert or any other place on the globe. Every place would be both particular and universal. In a 'sociocultural' reading, this political operation may be deemed characteristic of a postcolonial author who engages with the canon of European modernism. But just like Coetzee, we may take up the alternative 'transcendental-poetic' reading that presupposes a classic's power to speak across boundaries. In the conclusion of "What Is a Classic?" he states that in order for a classic to survive, it must be interrogated, even in hostile ways. We might claim then that Coetzee has helped Beckett's work to survive by interrogating and rewriting it. That is, he has treated it as a classic in his sense of the word.

Notes

1.   Kristin Ross, who notes French structuralism's avoidance of the question of decolonization, argues that "one looks in vain for the names of prominent or soon-to-be prominent structuralists such as Barthes, Lacan, Levi-Strauss, or others" as signatories of this same manifesto (162).

2.   Of course, this is not the only way. Coetzee directly confronts the questions of colonialism in his works such as *Waiting for the Barbarians* and *Foe.*

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NOT I IN AN IRISH CONTEXT

Futoshi Sakauchi

In *Not I*, Mouth tells the story of a woman who is socially neglected, religiously controlled, economically invisible, and legally powerless. In this paper, I examine the interconnections between Mouth's story and Irish controversies in recent years about the treatment of women. Additionally, I claim that *Not I* exemplifies the extent to which male writers can give voice effectively to women characters and their struggles.

Literary texts can vacillate between particularity and universality. Beckett's texts have thus been read, on the one hand, as an indefinite expansion toward universality, based on the impression that the playwright abandoned Ireland, and on the other hand, his works have been found to be enmeshed in Irish particularity, based on the assumption that the playwright never dissolved his psychological bonds with his native country.[1] I will examine the ways *Not I* is branded with Irishness not in a nostalgic but in a more provocative way.

Beckett is quoted as having Billie Whitelaw and her voice in mind when he wrote *Not I* in 1972 (Mays, 292), and indeed the "searing power" of Whitelaw as Mouth in London in 1973 had, as James Knowlson put it, "astonishing impact" upon the audience and exerted great influence over later productions of the play (Knowlson, 598).[2] Within an Irish context, later productions influenced by Whitelaw would include Julianne Moore's "superbly accomplished" performance in Irish director Neil Jordan's 2001 film version of the play (O'Toole 2001, 1) and the *Not I* staged by Bedrock Productions in 2006 at the Project Arts Theatre in Dublin, with Deirdre Roycroft as Mouth. Roycroft was praised for her "perfectly judged torrent of words as the disembodied mouth."[3]

Despite Whitelaw's primary influence on the play, *Not I* is foremost an Irish play. In his investigation of the "Kilcool" manuscript in

1975, Stanley Gontarski maintains that Beckett, after many subtle
twists and turns, developed *Not I* from the "Kilcool" manuscript with
its Irish locale (131-49). The Irish Theatre Institute (formerly The Thea-
tre Shop), founded in 1994 with financial support from the Arts Council
in Ireland, included *Not I* in its collection of new Irish plays for which it
was gathering information. Under the entry of Beckett's *Not I* in the
list, an editor summarizes it as a play in which "an actress is seated on
stage with just her mouth spot-lit […and] delivers a long stream of
consciousness."[4] Although included by the Irish Theatre Institute no
doubt because it is the work of a playwright of Irish nationality,
Beckett's concrete reference to Croker's Acres in one of the play's
sequences makes of *Not I* an Irish play in a stronger sense. Mouth's sad
tale chronicles grievous exclusions and lack of compassion in the Irish
society of Beckett's time.

It is striking to discover the extent to which recent Irish controver-
sies have brought to public attention the events recounted by Mouth:
irresponsible sexual intercourse, unwanted pregnancy, childbirth out of
wedlock, adoption and misery in a church-run institution, powerless-
ness in society, and the lack of mercy. Here let me quote from *Stolen
Child,* a play written by Yvonne Quinn and Bairbre Ní Chaoimh, which
depicts the sufferings of a mother, a rape victim, and the troubled life of
her daughter. The play, directed by Ní Chaoimh, was first produced at
the Andrews Lane Theatre in Dublin in 2002, the same year Irish film
director Peter Mullan released *The Magdalene Sisters*.[5] The play and
the film are among the latest serious attempts by Irish theatre and film
practitioners to excavate female voices smothered within church-run
institutions. In *Stolen Child,* an old mother recounts her traumatic ex-
perience: "He pushes me against the wall and starts pulling at my
clothes. I feel his freezing cold hand on my skin. He won't stop. […]
'Go home now, there's a good girl,' he says at the end, as he fixes his
clothes. 'Be careful. There's a lot of quare [queer] hawks around'" (74).
The sexual assault is followed by an unwanted pregnancy. And this
pregnancy is naturally followed by unwanted motherhood, as abortion
is not available in Ireland. The woman is classified as a social deviant
and her newborn baby is adopted by civil officials. The mother eventu-
ally abandons Ireland, swearing that she would "never set foot in that
rotten country again" (110).

Based on their extensive research for their play, the playwrights
Quinn and Ní Chaoimh describe how psychological and physical abuse
was common within institutions run by various religious orders, along

with the unbearably harsh religious discipline and corporal punishment that sometimes cost the lives of young inmates within their premises. The daughter of the rape victim in the play suffers as well. Lack of funds, as is quite often the case with an orphan, and legal complications concerning adoption prevent her from undertaking her cherished project of finding her mother for forty years. Because of her sense of power-lessness in the economic system and in the legal system in Irish society, distrust of human relationships and disbelief in love are gradually in-grained in her.

The persuasiveness of Quinn and Ní Chaoimh's play comes not only from the playwrights' great skills in storytelling and constructing dialogue but also from the reality of "a country torn apart by child sex-ual abuse" (O'Toole 2002, 14). In 1999, *States of Fear*, a documentary by Radio Telefís Éireann (the public service broadcaster of Ireland), which revealed the hidden history of child sexual abuse in religiously run institutions in Ireland, drew widespread public attention. The reli-ability of this astonishing documentary was dramatically increased by an official apology by the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), Bertie Ahern, on the following day, which opened the way for official inquiries.[6] Put in such a context, it is no wonder that Quinn and Ní Chaoimh's aesthetic achievement in grasping women's sexual trauma and the stigma of deviancy in Ireland was widely praised and that their *Stolen Child* was back in the theatre by popular demand in 2003.

However, as we have seen, the vicious circle of sexual assault, unwanted pregnancy, illegitimate childbirth, forced adoption, along with the merciless and loveless conditions in church-run institutions that *Stolen Child* has recently highlighted had already been brought to the stage thirty years earlier by Beckett in *Not I*. (It cannot be excluded, of course, that Quinn and Ní Chaoimh had either read or seen Beckett's play.) The father of the girl in Mouth's story vanishes into thin air after he buttons up his breeches, just as the ruffian in *Stolen Child* vanishes no sooner had he fixed his clothes: "parents unknown…unheard of…he having vanished…thin air…no sooner buttoned up his breeches…she similarly…eight months later…almost to the tick…" (376). The father is a father in the biological sense, yet in terms of any commitment to his family, if the relationship can be called family, the man who disappears immediately after sexual intercourse is not very different from a rapist in totally evading all social and ethical responsibility and the devastat-ing consequences of his act: pregnancy out of traditional wedlock and adoption of the newborn baby by a religious institution. The mother of

the girl in Becket's play disappears immediately after premature delivery.

An illegitimate orphan and speechless infant, the little girl in Mouth's story is adopted by a home run by a religious order, where she is indoctrinated with Protestant dogma and psalms, such as "God is love…tender mercies…new every morning" (383), which is also evocative of a song sung in the Catholic-run Magdalene asylums, "the great Redeemer's love, Lord thy mercies never fail" (qtd. in Weyman, 41-42). Yet, ironically enough, no one shows any kind of love or mercy to her. The sarcastic laughter with which Mouth punctuates references to "a merciful …God" serves to make her long sufferings tangible.

In retrospect, the plight of the orphaned girl in *Not I*'s story was an unhappy harbinger of what was to tear Ireland horribly apart thirty years later. In her memoir *Don't Ever Tell,* Kathy O'Beirne, a victim of child abuse in a religiously run institution in Ireland, describes how she dreamed revengefully that a Reverend Mother, who "ruined my childhood and left me a trembling wreck," is now in hell "asking for mercy," and that "'mercy' is written across the soot deposited on her [the nun's] forehead by the fires of hell" (229). Kathleen O'Malley, a survivor of child abuse in an institution run by the Sisters of Mercy, on encountering an official record which underscores the 'tender mercies' of the institution to child inmates ("children are well cared for and happy") exclaims that those impudent comments "almost made me laugh" (229). For many years, Gerard Mannix Flynn, a victim of sexual abuse in institutions "run by the congregations of religious Brothers and Nuns, under license of the State," has staged his autobiographical play *James X*, in which James, the protagonist, denounces all the official reports on him and concludes: "So here's your file, File No. 195702, your words, property of the State, the Church, their servants and agents and you the citizens. And this statement, this is your shame. There is no care in this file, no love" (54). Those victims are, like the abandoned girl in *Not I*, entangled in horrible nets, in which the lives of children are systematically devastated and ruined.

Brought up as a speechless child within a religiously run institution, the girl in Mouth's story is also speechless in society: "out shopping…busy shopping centre…supermart…just hand in the list […] motionless…staring into space…mouth half open as usual…" (379), and "practically speechless […] that time in court…what had she to say for herself […] stood there staring into space…mouth half open as usual…" (381). Her voice is practically smothered both in economic

exchange and in the legal system. Thus she is socially neglected, religiously controlled, economically invisible, and legally powerless, just as the rape victim and her daughter in *Stolen Child.*

From time to time, however, the woman in Mouth's story feels a sudden urge to tell, and rushes into the nearest public lavatory and starts to pour her words out: "once or twice a year…always winter some strange reason…the long evenings …hours of darkness…sudden urge to…tell…then rush out stop the first she saw…nearest lavatory…start pouring it out…steady stream…mad stuff…" (382). This sequence bears a striking similarity to an old woman observed by Irish poet, novelist, and playwright Brendan Kennelly in reality. Kennelly told the present writer that he saw an old Irish woman, half deranged, facing close into a wall and pouring out torrents of fragmentary words against it (2004). Kennelly turned the old woman's angry voice, which was absorbed into the wall and eternally lost in the void, into the angry voice of Medea in his version of Euripides's *Medea* in 1991. Kennelly's play expresses his desire to remove the wall that separated the old woman from her society and hindered her voice from being materialized in her community, a voice which might affect or challenge the community through literature or theatre.

Most likely, Kennelly was conscious of the relative exclusion of women's voices in the Irish literary and theatrical tradition and society in general, as he was no doubt aware of the questions raised in recent years in Ireland about the capacity of male writers to appreciate and represent female experience. The debate about the ability of male writers to give voice effectively to women characters and their struggles was particularly acrimonious in the first three volumes of *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*. This debate, which continued sporadically for more than a decade throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, highlighted a notable tendency to neglect female subjectivity and marginalize the female voice.

This ongoing debate is of interest not only for Beckett and Kennelly in the present context, but also for James Joyce (among others), whose story "Clay" (Joyce, 95-102) depicts how much a woman's eagerness for love is restricted by religious institutions like the Magdalene laundry. Perhaps Beckett recalled this story from *The Dubliners* while writing *Not I.* Joyce's protagonist Maria works in "the *Dublin by Lamplight* laundry," a reformatory institution for women, where her sexuality, just as those of female inmates in the Magdalene laundry, fruitlessly tapers off. At a home party on All Hallow's Eve, she sings a

love song, in which a bohemian girl thinks about her true lover. Here, as if she were a broken gramophone, she repeats the same lyrics and cannot complete her song properly, just as Mouth in *Not I* cannot complete her fragmentary torrents of words, as if she were a broken machine. Maria's sexual desire has been curbed for such a long time that on joining in a divination game, she repeats that she does not want a ring or a man. Indeed, she touches not a ring but a piece of clay, the symbol of death. Then on her second attempt, she gets "the prayer-book." The irony here is that she will live a cloistered life within the religious-run institution for the rest of her life just as she has lived so far. In this sequence, the route that Maria follows is suggestive. Joyce let his Maria make a short trip from Ballsbridge to Nelson Pillar on O'Connell Street, then to Eccles Street and to Henry Street, and finally to Drumcondra, thus, just as John Jackson and Bernard McGinley point out, Joyce lets Maria make the sign of the cross at the centre of Dublin (Jackson and McGinley, 90). By so doing, the author underscores the fact that her craving for love is constantly checked by religious discipline wherever she may wander around and even when she is not conscious of that. In the same fashion, prayers come back to Mouth's mind even when Mouth does not feel any love or mercy in them.

In drawing attention to some of the social concerns that *Stolen Child* – by two Irish female playwrights – as well as the works by Kennelly and Joyce share with Mouth's story in *Not I*, my purpose is, in part, to address the question about whether Irish male writers can effectively speak for Irish women and their griefs. The polarized nature of the Irish debate on men's capacity or inability to understand and represent women is still ongoing. In the process of this debate, the works of many Irish male writers and dramatists have been unjustly accused of marginalizing women, or their real engagement with the theme of female visibility has been disregarded through lack of recognition of the aesthetic and social values inherent in these male writers' and playwrights' texts. In my view, Joyce, Beckett, and Kennelly's remarkable recovery of shattered female voices and the stories they tell suggests that it is counterproductive to exclude Irish male writers in investigating this question. Instead, key texts in Anglo-Irish literature and drama, such as Beckett's and Joyce's, should be revisited and reassessed in this context.

Notes

1.   Declan Kiberd quotes interesting episodes about Beckett's attitude to his Irishness: "When asked whether he was English, his reply was laconic enough: 'au contraire.' To the end, Beckett held onto his green passport" (550).

2.   A film version of *Not I* was made of Billie Whitelaw's performance in 1975 and was shown on BBC2 in 1977; it was "greeted with puzzled acclaim" (Knowlson, 619-20, 636).

3.   Neil Jordan's film *Not I* (Blue Angel Films, 2001) is one of nineteen films included in the *Beckett on Film* project. For more details, see the official website of the project, <http://www.beckettonfilm.com>. In his review of the Bedrock Productions, Alan O'Riordan concludes that "the inspired use to which Beckett could put his moribund insights" for his later works could be glimpsed through the performance of the female actor in *Not I*. See O'Riordan's review in the *Irish Independent*.

4.   "*Not I*," in *Irish Playography*,
 http://www.irishplayography.com/search/play.asp?play_id=2163,
accessed 28 Sept. 2006.

5.   *The Magdalene Sisters* was produced by Scottish Screen, The Film Council, and The Irish Film Board in 2002. The film follows the stories of women in the religiously run Magdalene asylum in Ireland. Some of the inmates are rape victims and some are young mothers who gave birth out of wedlock. Regarded as sinners, they are treated with extreme cruelty within the institution. The film caused a national sensation in Ireland in 2002 and eventually won international film awards, such as the Golden Lion Prize at the Venice Film Festival in 2002, the Audience Award at the Los Angeles IFP/West Film Festival in 2003, and the ALFS Award at the London Critics Circle Film Awards in 2004.

6.   The Laffoy Commission was set up by the Government in 1999 for the purpose of comprehensive investigation of allegations of child abuse. Since the commission started to invite ex-residents of religiously run institutions, who "consider that their experience of life in the institution was positive," the commission was criticised by the victims of abuse for making "appeasement to the religious threats to stifle and stagnate the commission." In disarray through delay, uncertainty, legal challenges by the Christian Brothers, and the "adversarial, defensive and legalistic approach" of the religious orders, Justice Mary Laffoy eventually resigned in September 2003, and the commission came to an

impasse. Her position was taken over by Seán Ryan SC, and it is expected that the commission will complete its investigation into nearly 5,000 compensation claims for sexual abuse in religious and State-run institutions. The process of the investigation by the commission has shown that it is extremely difficult to get hold of the reality of so complicated and sensitive an issue in Ireland. See *Irish Times,* 5 Feb. 2000; 18 and 25 Feb. 2003; 10 Mar. 2003; 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 27 Sept. 2003; 4 Oct. 2004. For the quotations in this note, see especially the editions of the *Irish Times* of 18 Feb. and 10 Mar. 2003.

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"SSSH" : SOUNDS AND SIGNS OF SILENCE

ENTRE "MOTS MUETS" ET SILENCE BRUISSANT:
le 'je' en tension

Julia Siboni

Throughout his oeuvre, Beckett wavers between "unspoken words" and murmurous silences questioning in this manner the nature of the existence of "true silence." The tension between these two poles reflects the perpetual (re)construction, (re)definition of an inside and outside, interiority and exteriority. Indeed, the limit between these two spaces turns out to be more often than not mobile and porous, letting sound pass through. Thus the Beckettian subject is called on to search for a place in this profoundly dynamic space of tension, which is both limit and border and the ground of a precarious and elusive identity.

"Le tu est la lumière du dit, et toute présence absence," écrit Beckett dans *Le monde et le pantalon* (22), montrant ainsi la perméabilité de la frontière entre parole et silence, présence et absence. Extraire de la voix le silence qu'elle recèle et dont elle procède, mais aussi extraire du silence la voix, tel est l'enjeu des textes de Beckett.

En effet, deux phénomènes renvoient à cette limite poreuse au sein du langage: les "mots muets" et leur envers, le silence bruissant, deux facettes d'un même processus, "ce fouillis de silence et de mots, de silences qui n'en sont pas, de mots qui sont des murmures" (Beckett 1958a, 158). Or cette limite, tantôt mouvante – les *Poèmes* évoquent ces "seuils mouvants" (22) – tantôt perméable, et même parfois abolie, est à l'image de celle qui à la fois sépare et relie le dedans et le dehors, perméabilité incarnée par le crâne, cette cavité à la fois fermée sur elle-même et ouverte sur le monde extérieur. De même que la fenêtre – motif récurrent dans l'œuvre beckettienne, emblématique de la limite entre le dedans et le dehors – laisse passer le regard, ou que les yeux matérialisent le point de jonction entre l'extériorité et l'intériorité, de même les tympans assurent la traversée du son.

Partant, que peut-on en déduire sur l'identité du sujet? Quelle présence du Je cette cartographie intra-externe ou extra-interne dessine-t-elle? C'est assurément un sujet prisonnier des mots mais 'en voie de' s'en affranchir qui nous est présenté à travers l'œuvre de Beckett. Ce mouvement vers un silence qui serait enfin total et 'définitif' (c'est-à-dire, étymologiquement, 'limité'), cette tension, fondent précisément l'être.

On relève de très nombreuses occurrences du syntagme "mots muets," notamment dans *Comment c'est* et dans *Impromptu d'Ohio* (62 à deux reprises, 65 et 66), où les "mots muets" sont "entendus," c'est-à-dire que des mots prononcés mais inaudibles se font entendre. Dans *La dernière bande*, la didascalie indique: "*Ses lèvres remuent sans bruit en formant les syllabes de viduité*" (19); dans *Oh les beaux jours*, "*Une prière inaudible remue ses lèvres. [...] Une arrière-prière inaudible remue de nouveau ses lèvres*" (12-13); dans *...que nuages...*, "*Les lèvres de F bougent, prononçant de façon inaudible*: '...nuages... que nuages... passant dans le ciel...'" (45).

De même, on peut s'interroger sur le sens de la didascalie "*avec voix*" dans *Esquisse radiophonique* (94), qui semble sous-entendre qu'il existerait *a contrario* des paroles sans voix. De façon poétique, ces mots muets sont appelés dans *L'innommable* "gouttes de silence à travers le silence" (159). Et en effet, les mots muets, eux-mêmes silencieux, viennent s'inscrire sur fond de silence, le perforer, y "forer des trous," pour reprendre l'expression de Beckett lui-même dans sa lettre en allemand à valeur programmatique datée de 1937 et adressée à Axel Kaun (1983, 51-54).

Samuel Beckett nous fait donc croire à la possibilité d'un 'dire en silence' et les mots muets s'apparentent alors à un numéro de ventriloquie, mais à l'envers. Le ventriloque parle sans bouger les lèvres, tandis que les personnages de Beckett remuent la bouche sans parler, du moins de façon audible. Dans *Pas*, on peut d'ailleurs lire la mention suivante: "Aucun son (*Un temps*). D'audible tout au moins" (13), la correction à valeur de précision attestant l'existence de sons inaudibles. Sur ce modèle, dans *Comment c'est*, on trouve des déclinaisons telles que les "éjaculations muettes" (63 à deux reprises) ou les "malédictions muettes" (64, 75 et 195 à deux reprises).

Quant au silence, à l'inverse, selon Alain Simon, il "doit être encore du son, comme le ciment qui lie les briques est le MUR autant que les briques" (85). Merleau-Ponty, dans la *Phénoménologie de la perception*, écrit: "ce silence prétendu est bruissant de paroles" (213),

montrant ainsi qu'il n'existe pas de 'silence silencieux.' Le silence en effet semble toujours peuplé, habité et s'oppose en cela à un "vrai silence": "Est-ce que j'entends quelque chose en ce moment? Voyons. Non. Ni le vent, ni la mer, ni le papier, ni l'air que j'expulse avec tant de peine. Mais cet innombrable babil, comme d'une foule qui chuchote? Je ne comprends pas" (Beckett 1951, 168), et "que dire du vrai silence, je ne sais pas, que je ne le connais pas, qu'il n'y en a pas " (1953, 203).

Dans les *Textes pour rien*, le silence est même doté d'une voix: "une voix et un silence, une voix de silence, la voix de mon silence" (1958a, 186). L'expression oxymorique "entendre le silence," employée à plusieurs reprises, se trouve par conséquent éclairée par le caractère bruissant du silence: "Un long silence se fit entendre" (Beckett 1957a, 70-71); "Jamais entendu pareil silence" (1960, à deux reprises, en écho, 24 et 32). Il est intéressant de noter sur ce dernier point que la version anglaise de *Krapp's Last Tape* parvient à éviter cet écart de sens contenu dans l'oxymore en français, puisqu'elle recourt au verbe *to know*: "Never knew such silence" (15 et 18).

Ce silence qui se donne à entendre peut alors être qualifié de 'bruissant.' Or, Roland Barthes place la notion de bruissement en corrélation étroite avec la question de la frontière: "Le bruissement dénote un bruit limite, un bruit impossible, le bruit de ce qui, fonctionnant à la perfection, n'a pas de bruit; bruire, c'est faire entendre l'évaporation même du bruit" (100), "évaporation" qui se fait souvent épanchement physique, physiologique, 'suintement,' "toujours le même murmure, ruisselant" chez Beckett (1958a, 167-68).

Le silence semble ainsi recouvrir trois types de bruissements distincts: (1) Le bruissement des voix, peuplé de murmures: "Ce sont des mots qui me bruissent dans la tête depuis hier, dit Mercier, et me brûlent les lèvres" (Beckett 1970, 100). Le personnage est alors conscient que ces voix ne sont pas lui, mais qu'il ne peut essayer d'être lui qu'à travers ces voix. (2) Les bruits du monde qui viennent ponctuer un silence jamais pur. La pièce radiophonique *Tous ceux qui tombent* en constitue un parfait exemple. (3) Le bruit assourdissant qui vient s'inscrire en toile de fond: on peut alors se référer au bourdon de *Pas moi* qui produit un "grondement de cataracte… dans le crâne" (94).

Désormais, si on parle, c'est uniquement pour couvrir cet "assourdissant silence" (Beckett 1958a, 165) que l'on entend en permanence. Dans *En attendant Godot*, Estragon dit converser pour ne pas entendre

les voix mortes qui "chuchotent," "murmurent," "bruissent" (88), dans un mouvement *decrescendo*.

Ainsi, à l'issue de cette classification, peut-on mettre en présence à la fois des mots mortifères (car muets, repliés sur eux-mêmes, tournés vers l'intérieur) et un silence à l'énergie vitale débordante, constructeur, ouvert sur l'extérieur, sur le monde.

Par conséquent, la dialectique entre le dedans et le dehors s'avère complexe, comme le prouvent ces propos ironiques de *Watt* qui mettent en évidence la délicate question de la simultanéité temporelle ("en même temps") et spatiale ("entre," le lieu de l'entre-deux) de l'intériorité et de l'extériorité: "Tout ce qui se passait se passait au-dedans de lui et en même temps tout ce qui se passait se passait au-dehors de lui. J'espère que c'est net." (43), et un peu plus loin, "cette présence dehors, cette présence dedans, cette présence entre, de ce qui n'existait pas" (45). Le présent incarnerait alors la tentative visant à saisir cette limite insaisissable. Jean-Louis Barrault met en lumière cette simultanéité des sensations caractéristique du genre théâtral en tant qu'"art-synthèse":

> mille bruits qui se propagent, mille actions qui se déroulent, et surtout, ce silence tout à coup qui prend forme comme par cristallisation à cet instant, à cet arrêt pendant lequel nos sens sont atteints par cette simultanéité, à cette infime fraction de seconde où apparaît la première gouttelette de condensation théâtrale, cette frontière insaisissable qui sépare le futur et le passé et que l'on nomme le plus rapidement possible afin que déjà ce ne soit pas le passé, le Présent; c'est cette arête qu'au théâtre nous tâchons sans cesse d'élargir pour en saisir la marche, le mouvement.
>
> (96-97)

La limite entre le dedans et le dehors pourrait presque s'apparenter à un art de la "disjonction incluse," pour reprendre les mots de Gilles Deleuze dans *L'épuisé* (61). En construisant une réalité du monde réversible − une intériorité externe et une extériorité interne − le crâne joue le rôle de 'chambre noire' ("nous sommes bien entendu dans une tête," Beckett 1958a, 57) où se révèlent les images forgées par le silence; celui-ci devient le 'négatif' – au sens photographique du terme – à partir duquel se développent les images. De plus, il est à la fois surface et volume, conformément à l'analyse de Rachel Boué: "surface réceptive aux sons extérieurs et volume à l'intérieur duquel circulent des bruis-

sements et s'entendent des résonances" (142). Les tympans, souvent
mentionnés, représentent alors le lieu de passage à double sens entre
l'extérieur et l'intérieur.

Certes, on observe un mouvement vers l'intériorité, de repli sur
soi, récurrent dans *Comment c'est*: "d'abord dehors quaqua de toutes
parts puis en moi quand ça cesse de haleter" (9). Cependant, le chemi-
nement conduit à l'inverse vers l'extérieur, dans *Dis Joe*: la voix sem-
ble être celle de Joe conversant avec lui-même, sa propre voix inté-
rieure qui se livrerait à un processus d'extériorisation. Il s'agit de faire
entendre dehors la voix du dedans: "Tu sais cet enfer de quatre sous que
tu appelles ta tête… C'est là où tu m'entends, non?..." (84). Néanmoins,
l'alternative assure la permanence d'un doute pour le lecteur-
spectateur: s'agit-il de bruits (paroles, sons, voix) du dehors qui vien-
draient se répercuter dans la tête, ou bien au contraire, d'une réalité
interne construisant de toute pièce un écho du monde extérieur? C'est
cette dernière hypothèse que retient *Murphy*:

> L'esprit de Murphy s'imaginait comme une grande sphère creuse,
> fermée hermétiquement à l'univers extérieur. Cela ne constituait
> pas un appauvrissement, car il n'excluait rien qu'il ne renfermât
> en lui-même. Rien n'avait été, ni n'était, ni ne serait, dans
> l'univers extérieur à lui, qui ne fût déjà présent, soit en puissance,
> soit en acte, soit en puissance montant vers l'acte, soit en acte dé-
> clinant vers la puissance, dans l'univers intérieur à lui.
>
> (81)

Dans *Bing*, c'est la présentation d'un lieu intemporel, gommant toute
frontière, qui met un terme à ce dilemme: "fixe face silence dedans hop
ailleurs où de tout temps" (65). Mais de la même façon que l'autre ren-
voie toujours au moi, l'ailleurs renvoie à l'ici, souvent assimilé à une
tête, et donc à la question de la limite, de la délimitation. Les yeux
pourraient alors symboliser cette ouverture, cette fente par laquelle
perce le dehors intrusif, par laquelle il se saisit de l'intérieur: "Il ouvrit
tout grand les yeux à la lumière de la lune, avec ses doigts il écarquilla
les paupières, le jaune suinta à travers jusque dans son crâne" (Beckett
1947, 80). Ici, la valeur traditionnelle du suintement (de rejet de
l'intérieur vers l'extérieur) est totalement renversée puisque le jaune, la
lumière de la lune, suinte à l'intérieur par l'entremise du regard.

Ce va-et-vient incessant, cet échange de flux entre l'extérieur et
l'intérieur tend en définitive à souligner le caractère incertain de la

frontière, devenue tantôt poreuse, tantôt mouvante: "Entrée à travers crâne jusqu'à la substance molle. Exit hors substance molle à travers crâne. Béants dans visage invisible. Ça la faille? Ça le défaut de faille?" (Beckett 1991, 57-58).

Deleuze, dans *L'épuisé*, nomme "langue III" la langue qui se consacre à "des limites immanentes qui ne cessent de se déplacer, hiatus, trous ou déchirures dont on ne se rendrait pas compte, les attribuant à la simple fatigue, s'ils ne grandissaient pas tout d'un coup de manière à accueillir quelque chose qui vient du dehors ou d'ailleurs" (69-70). La dialectique même entre intérieur et extérieur met ainsi au jour cette frontière perçue non plus comme élément (dé)limitant, mais bien davantage comme facteur dynamique ("faille," "hiatus, trous ou déchirures") remettant perpétuellement en question un équilibre précaire et sans cesse à retrouver.

Si la frontière résiste à l'œuvre de la déstabilisation, force est de constater avec Denis Vasse que cette limite demeure ouverte: "La voix est subversion de la clôture. Qu'elle nomme ou qu'elle appelle, la voix traverse la clôture sans pour autant la rompre" (20). Dans *Murphy*, le silence est défini comme étant une "frêle cloison" (184), soit une limite fragile, perméable. Watt, quant à lui, confesse son goût pour la "limite molle":

> J'avais un faible pour les clôtures, pour les clôtures de fil de fer, un grand faible; pas pour les murs, ni pour les palissades, ni pour les haies opaques, non; mais pour tout ce qui limitait le mouvement, sans pour autant limiter la vue, pour le fossé, la fosse, la fenêtre à barreaux, le marécage, le sable mouvant, la claire-voie, pour tous j'avais de la tendresse, à cette époque, une grande tendresse.
>
> (162-63)

Dans le même ordre d'idée, l'adverbe "à peine," cher à l'auteur, dit cet état de fébrilité, en figurant un espace précisément ancré à la limite: ni d'un côté, ni de l'autre, non pas pour gommer la frontière, mais pour maintenir la tension, pour tenter d'"aspirer ce vide" (1981, 76).

L'analyse des liens et de la nature de la relation entre l'intériorité et l'extériorité pose nécessairement la question de l'être, car cette dialectique forge un 'je' tiraillé, écartelé entre le dedans et le dehors. Le sujet beckettien pourrait en conséquence résider tout entier (ou tenter de résider, puisque aucune 'résidence' ne semble définitivement acquise

chez Beckett) dans le terme de 'tension.' Cette notion parcourt toute l'œuvre, à travers le personnage récurrent du guetteur par exemple, mais aussi à travers un lexique tel que "à l'affût," "attendre," "attention," "tendu," "écoute," "guetter"... La figure du gardien apparaît également dans les *Textes pour rien*: "Mes gardiens, pourquoi gardiens, je ne risque pas de m'en aller, ah je vois, c'est pour que je me croie prisonnier, gonflé de présence, à faire céder les murs, les murailles, les frontières" (154).

Cette tension est peut-être davantage perceptible au théâtre dans la mesure où, communément, l'acteur est là pour parler. Grâce à son silence, sa présence se trouve donc rehaussée: il est là pour être là, c'est-à-dire silencieux; le silence construit la présence de l'acteur en tant qu'être-là dénué d'intentionnalité.

En outre, le désir constant et inassouvi d'une fin prochaine maintient le résidu en tension. L'être beckettien se trouve sans cesse tiraillé, dans une sorte de condamnation à perpétuité, entre le silence de l'origine, fondateur, constructeur, et celui rêvé de la fin, perçu comme un retour impérieux. Le silence à "retrouver" devient alors objet de la quête. Néanmoins, le silence 'final' chez Beckett est moins celui de la fin (car cette fin est toujours incertaine, différée et jamais totalement et purement silencieuse), qu'un silence 'téléologique,' un objectif qui maintient le texte en tension. La poursuite de cet objectif a alors pour fonction d'exacerber une stratégie d'écriture dilatoire, le but ultime étant, dans une phrase des *Textes pour rien* elle-même au bord de l'éclatement (perceptible à travers les allitérations en [k] et en [r]), de "crever craquant d'imprécations rentrées, éclater muet " (125-26). Le verbe "crever" revêt par ailleurs un double sens ici: à la fois celui de la mort (dans un usage relâché de la langue) et le sens propre de la crevaison (tel un ballon qui se dégonfle ou explose).

La tension est également palpable dans l'emploi que l'auteur fait du mode conditionnel dans *Malone meurt*: ce mode exprime une fin souhaitée mais non actualisée – conformément à cette incessante dérobade de l'idée de fin dans toute l'œuvre – mais c'est également un mode qui, par sa seconde appellation de 'futur dans le passé,' met en présence un 'je' tiraillé entre deux temps, le futur et le passé: "Mais au fond de l'ombre c'était le silence, celui de la poussière et des choses qui ne bougeraient jamais, s'il ne dépendait que d'elles. Et du réveil qu'il ne voyait pas le tic-tac était comme la voix du silence qui lui aussi, comme l'ombre, vaincrait un jour. Et alors tout serait silencieux et noir et les choses seraient à leur place pour toujours, enfin" (48).

Par conséquent, le 'je' est écartelé entre passé et futur, dans un présent dans lequel il convient de tenter de se maintenir, de garder l'équilibre. Ainsi, à la division divine originelle entre lumière et ténèbres succède celle toute beckettienne entre dedans et dehors. L'origine de la création du monde beckettien réside donc dans cette bipartition rendue délibérément floue. Dans ce tableau, le sujet occupe la place instable et périlleuse de la limite, constitutive de son être même:

> [...] c'est peut-être ça que je sens, qu'il y a un dehors et un dedans et moi au milieu, c'est peut-être ça que je suis, la chose qui divise le monde en deux, d'une part le dehors, de l'autre le dedans, ça peut être mince comme une lame, je ne suis ni d'un côté ni de l'autre, je suis au milieu, je suis la cloison, j'ai deux faces et pas d'épaisseur, c'est peut-être ça que je sens, je me sens qui vibre, je suis le tympan, d'un côté c'est le crâne, de l'autre le monde, je ne suis ni de l'un ni de l'autre [...].
>
> (1953, 159-60)

Samuel Beckett avait confié dans un entretien que la réception de son œuvre reposait sur un "malentendu," non pas au sens où elle serait mal comprise, mais pour souligner la nécessité de réhabiliter une meilleure écoute de son œuvre (Bernold, 55). Or précisément, mots muets et silence bruissant forcent l'écoute du lecteur-spectateur. Il s'agit de 'tendre' l'oreille pour mieux saisir (en la doublant) la tension déjà perceptible entre le dedans et le dehors. Le sujet beckettien se fait donc acteur d'une quête à la fois tournée vers le silence d'avant le commencement et vers celui escompté d'une fin à venir. Si le dernier volume d'*À la recherche du temps perdu* de Proust s'intitule *Le temps retrouvé*, il n'en est pas de même chez Beckett: dans la recherche du silence perdu, il n'y aura pas de silence retrouvé, car ce dernier demeure un horizon, à trouver et/ou à retrouver.

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WRITING SILENCE:
Samuel Beckett's Early Mimes

Jonathan Tadashi Naito

In the twentieth century, French theatre was dramatically transformed by a reconsideration of the possibilities of mime. However, Samuel Beckett's three early mimes, "Dreamer's Mime A" and *Acts Without Words I* and *II*, have not been identified with this phenomenon. This essay argues that rather than being eccentric works, these early mimes were crucial in Beckett's development of a decidedly corporeal dramatic aesthetic. In this respect, he has much in common with his French contemporaries Jacques Copeau and Jean-Louis Barrault, who, through a broadly conceived notion of mime, sought to return the body to the stage.

The narration in Beckett's fiction is famously caught up in a concomitant attraction to and fear of silence. To take just one well known example, *The Unnamable* ends with its final narrator wrestling with the possibility of silence: "all words, there's nothing else, you must go on, that's all I know, they're going to stop, I know that well, I can feel it, they're going to abandon me, it will be the silence, for a moment, a good few moments" (414). However, Beckett also created a small number of dramatic works in which silence is not just asymptotically approached but a condition of their production. I am speaking here of Beckett's early mimes *Acts Without Words I* and *II* and the unfinished "Dreamer's Mime A"; three works from the 1960s: the abandoned "J. M. Mime" and "Mongrel Mime," and the silent film, *Film*; and two late works, *Quad* and *Nacht und Träume*. Together these writings constitute a formidable collection of silent works produced at a time when neither legal restrictions nor technology made silence necessary on either stage or screen. In direct contrast to the thematic treatment of silence elsewhere in his oeuvre, Beckett's silent dramas refuse the metaphysical possibilities of the speech-silence dichotomy, instead opting for a mode

of performance and a style of writing that seem an odd choice for a writer with the verbal precision of Beckett: a purely 'physical' meta-physical theatre.

I want to hold on to the oddity of Beckett's interest in the first and most significant of these silent genres, mime, while also suggesting that the immediate context of his writing makes his turn to mime less surprising. Mime is a performance genre closely associated with Paris and one that in the immediate post-war period was undergoing a boom in popularity; thus, in works such as *Acts Without Words I* and *II*, when his dramatic writing might be said to have most directly approached an abstract, universal aesthetic, it was in fact drawing closer to the aesthetics of Beckett's adopted home. In addition, many of the issues that became increasingly important for Beckett as a dramatist had already and would continue to receive a great deal of attention in mime: the decoupling of speech and movement, the relationship between dance and drama, the role of music (literally and figuratively), the challenges and possibilities of solo performance, and, most famously, silence. Perhaps most significantly, it is hardly coincidental that it is in his early experiments in mime that the body emerges as a crucial aspect of Beckett's dramatic writing. While *Eleutheria* reveals his interest in crafting stage space and *Waiting for Godot* a musical attention to language, neither of these plays – in their original form – exhibits the attention to the rhythms of physical movement and the desire for precise tableaux of Beckett's later dramatic works.[1] Indeed, excepting his typographical experiments in *Murphy* and *Watt*, it was in his early mimes that Beckett first established himself as a visual artist.

Paris and Mime

The silent pantomimes commonly referred to as 'mimes' have been closely associated with Paris for more than three hundred years.[2] The birth of modern mime dates to 1697 when Louis XIV forbade a popular group of Italian players to use dialogue during their performances. In France, prohibitions on dialogue, along with restrictions on repertoire, the use of music, and cast size were widespread until the early nine-teenth century. As performers discovered creative ways to cope with these restrictions, mime flourished, especially with the emergence of the mime Jean-Baptiste Gaspard Deburau in 1819. The nineteenth-century French pantomime style, known as *la pantomime blanche* because of its white-faced performers, is closely associated with Deburau. After his death in 1847, mime struggled to move past his innovations.

In the first few decades of the twentieth century, mime underwent a modernist transformation. Jacques Copeau assumed the lead role in these efforts, founding the Théâtre du Vieux-Colombier and later a school. Copeau aimed to create an alternative to the melodramatic acting that then dominated Paris by turning to what he saw as the more stripped down, body-centered drama of ancient Greek theatre and Japanese Noh. In a description that seems presciently Beckettian, the characteristics of a Copeau-trained actor included "a gift for dynamic immobility; a clear and coherent way of moving; a taste for sharp turns of the head or other isolated movements or gestures which drew focus; and a certain presence" (Leabhart, 24). While his school focused on the expressive qualities of the body, particularly in 'corporeal mime,' in which actors used masks to break their reliance upon the face, it is important to note that the school also provided training in voice production, diction, singing, and other speech techniques. In this fashion, Copeau sought to reclaim what he saw as the forgotten legacy of mime as a broad field that included both silent pantomime and performances that incorporated sounds and words along with metaphorical movement. This ultimately resulted in Copeau's brand of mime coming to occupy a position that is extremely difficult to define, resting at the intersection of drama, dance, and gymnastics.

The mid-twentieth century resurgence of mime as a popular performance genre was a direct result of this Paris-based modernist experimentation. Both Jean-Louis Barrault and Marcel Marceau, the most famous mimes of the immediate post-war era, were students of Étienne Decroux, perhaps the most accomplished of Copeau's students and certainly the one most dedicated to mime. In keeping with Copeau's broad conception of mime, it seems appropriate that the popular resurgence of the genre began not on the stage but on the screen. The film *Les Enfants du paradis* (*Children of Paradise*), made during the Second World War and first shown in 1945, offered a romantic epic of life in Paris a century earlier. In the film, a beautiful woman moves among four suitors: an actor, a criminal, a count, and the famous mime Jean-Baptiste Deburau. While the film became a landmark in French cinema, Jean-Louis Barrault, the talented performer who played the role of Deburau, and mime in general were the immediate beneficiaries of its popular success. In 1946, Barrault developed and performed *Baptiste*, a stage version of the pantomimes from *Les Enfants du paradis*, which itself became a film in short order.

Marcel Marceau performed the role of Harlequin in *Baptiste* in 1946 and 1947, but with Barrault firmly entrenched in the role that he had made famous, Marceau soon set about crafting his own stage persona Bip, a faux nineteenth-century mime with some Chaplinesque flourishes. Bip made his debut in 1947, and though Marceau continued to do both multicharacter silent dramas and solo performances for several years, the popularity of Bip was such that by 1952 Marceau had begun to undertake frequent international tours as a solo performer. As his fame grew, Marceau also began to attract criticism for seemingly turning his back on the artistic and political ambitions of modernist mime, opting for a light, crowd pleasing aesthetic instead.

Beckett's Early Mimes

Beckett first turned to mime in the early to mid-1950s, at a time when the field was sorting itself into two camps: on the one hand, Marceau and his imitators, who cultivated an updated version of *la pantomime blanche*; and on the other, the practitioners and theorists who sought to continue the more innovative work of Copeau and Decroux. Three of Beckett's mimes from this period have survived, all of which were originally written in French: *Acts Without Words I* and *II* and the abandoned "Mime du rêveur A" ("Dreamer's Mime A"). Even the most well-known of these works, *Act Without Words I*, has received little in the way of critical attention, and as S. E. Gontarski has observed: "often ignored, the play has generally not fared well even among those critics who have treated it" (1993, 29). Just as significantly, when critics have chosen to discuss it, they have done so in relation to topics such as clowning, silent film comedies, Heidegger, and Wolfgang Köhler's experiments on apes, rather than addressing its relationship to mime.[3] The reluctance to consider Beckett's early mimes as mimes has led to a lack of recognition of their significance in his development of an increasingly visual and corporeal drama. Beckett's early work in mime was also a crucial precedent for his subsequent work in genres other than fiction and the stage play. It was in mime that he first experimented with the incorporation of music and first turned to diagrams and the schematic mode of writing that would be central in his teleplays and film. No less than that of Copeau and his associates, Beckett's work traveled through mime to a location at the intersection of several genres.

Most critics have speculated that the abandoned "Dreamer's Mime A" was Beckett's first attempt at a mime, largely because it reads

like an early rough draft of *Endgame*.[4] Particularly suggestive in this regard is the setting: a room with two round windows, with a rocking chair at center stage. During the mime, the single character, A, struggles to maintain his balance, as he removes and inspects a series of objects from the pocket of his bathrobe. Three times, A gives himself a sleep-inducing injection; when A falls asleep, Beckett intended to cut away to a mime within the mime that interrupts the main action for increasingly longer intervals. Unfortunately, nothing is known about the mime within the mime, and Beckett claimed to have never written it (Gontarski 1985, 27).

If "Dreamer's Mime A" was in fact Beckett's first mime, this is very significant because it means that, unlike his first forays into radio and film, he chose to move in this direction on his own. This has been obscured by the fact that the first mime that he was able to complete was the result of a request. Beckett wrote *Act Without Words I* in response to a request from Deryk Mendel, a Sadler's Wells-trained dancer in need of new material for his Paris cabaret. Beckett wrote the mime in 1955, and though Mendel liked the finished product, it required the wings and flies of a regular theatre making it too technically demanding for a small cabaret. While they waited for an opportunity to perform the piece in an appropriate venue, the team was expanded to include John Beckett, Samuel Beckett's cousin, who composed a musical accompaniment. As Beckett continued to work on *Endgame* in 1955 and 1956, the play and the mime became intertwined. With the idea that *Endgame* would need to be paired with another work in order to make for a full night of theatre, the plan soon became for the two to be staged together. The relationship between *Act Without Words I* and *Endgame* is hinted at in the texts themselves, but Beckett also addressed this topic in a letter to Barney Rosset. In the letter, he described *Act Without Words I* as "in some obscure way, a codicil to *End-Game*, and as such requires that this last extremity of human meat – or bones – be there, thinking and stumbling and sweating, under our noses, like Clov about Hamm, but gone from refuge."[5] It is this idea – the possibility of using the stage to experiment with "human meat," or the body – that Beckett took from his mimes and applied in *Endgame*.

Ruby Cohn has accurately summarized *Act Without Words I* as Beckett's version of the Tantalus myth (2001, 218). In a setting described as a "desert," the lone character in the mime is repeatedly taunted, first by a whistle from offstage and then by a carafe of water that hovers just out of reach (1984, 43). As the whistle sounds, first

from stage left and then from stage right, the man attempts to follow it, only to be flung back onto the stage in each case. When the whistle sounds a third time, now from above, the man has learned to ignore it. The carafe proves equally frustrating. Even with the aide of several objects that, like the carafe, descend from the flies, his attempts to reach it prove futile. Having failed in his immediate project, he appears to contemplate suicide with a pair of tailor's scissors, only to have the scissors quickly whisked away. The man falls to the ground after a final attempt to reach the carafe and remains motionless, even as the carafe descends low enough to play about his face. As the mime ends, the helpless player looks at his hands.

The effect of this striving is a realization of Copeau's 'dynamic immobility.' *Act Without Words I* is an almost giddy exploration of the space of the stage, horizontally and vertically, that very quickly turns into a meditation on the body and its limitations. This is perhaps nowhere more apparent than in the final words of the play: "he looks at his hands" (46). The man pursues the carafe of water to satisfy his bodily needs, only to discover that his bodily limits are even more circumscribed than he had assumed. In Beckett's mime, the dominant action is "reflection," which, in the absence of speech, becomes a distinctly physical act. Finally, after his last fall, the phrase "does not move" takes the place of the word "reflects," suggesting a complete cessation of thought. At the conclusion of the mime, when the man finds himself staring blankly at his hands, he is reconciled not just to the desirability of not desiring, but to the limitations of his own body. It also bears mention that this experience with bodily limitations is specifically focused on the extremities of the body. It is as if Beckett is staging Copeau's project: the rediscovery of the body in a dramatic tradition that has been dominated for too long by the face and the mouth.

Beckett continued his experiments with the body in his third mime, *Act Without Words II*, which he claimed to have written at the same time as *Act Without Words I*, though it was first published and performed in 1959 and 1960, respectively. Without the striving for a discreet objective that gives *Act Without Words I* its narrative drive, *Act Without Words II* instead focuses on a cycle of mundane tasks, none of which rise to the level of an event. In the mime, two characters, A and B, are each prodded into performing a short routine that simulates the course of a day: waking up, getting dressed, eating, undressing, and preparing for sleep. The two routines are similar, but not identical: while A prays, takes pills, and spends much of his time brooding; B

opts for exercise and personal grooming in place of prayer, consults a map and compass instead of medicating himself, and checks his watch where A broods. Much of the impact of the piece rests on the contrast between the two characters – on the physicality of the actions, rather than the meaning of the actions themselves.

This attention to physicality is reflected in the mode of writing that *Act Without Words II* inaugurates within Beckett's oeuvre. This mode of writing is evident in the note that begins the text:

> This mime should be played on a low and narrow platform at back of stage, violently lit in its entire length, the rest of the stage being in darkness. Frieze effect.

> A is slow, awkward (gags dressing and undressing), absent. B brisk, rapid, precise. The two actions therefore, though B has more to do than A, should have approximately the same duration.

> (1984, 49)

Consider the amount of attention that Beckett has given here to the pace and rhythm of the action as well as to the mime's visual tableaux. As this note highlights, while his mimes place silence in the foreground, they also put silence to rest by shifting the site of tension from the relationship between sound and silence to the relationship between action and inaction. *Act Without Words II*, the culmination of his first period of interest in mime, demonstrates the degree to which Beckett's conception of his role as dramatist had shifted from one centered on the rhythms of language to one centered on the rhythms of movement. In effect, through his experiments with mime, Beckett's drama began to assume many of the characteristics of physical theatre.

Act Without Words II begins with the note and ends with a diagram: a sketch that shows the arrangement of A, B, and the pile of clothes that they share – conveniently abbreviated as "C" – that clears up any possible confusion about the relative position of these entities as they move from stage left to stage right. This is to my knowledge the first time that Beckett included an actual diagram in one of his completed dramatic texts. From this point forward, diagrams would be especially important in his works for film and television, such as his

script for *Film* (1964) and those for the teleplays *Ghost Trio* (1976/77), *...but the clouds...* (1977), and *Quad* (1982/84). Diagrams also appear in some of his plays, including *Come and Go* (1966/67), *Footfalls* (1976), and *What Where* (1983/84). Indeed, the narrow, rectangular playing space in *Act Without Words II* calls to mind the more intricate mise en scene that he later crafted for *Footfalls*, a play that with its complex choreography of speech and movement fits easily within Copeau's definition of corporeal mime. One could also add to the previous list the dramatic texts that do not include diagrams, but would seem to require them. For instance, a quick glance at the letters that Alan Schneider exchanged with Beckett prior to the premiere of *Happy Days* (1962) is a good reminder of the complexity of Beckett's intentions for the piece in a visual sense and the difficulty of conveying these ideas through words alone.[6]

Coda: Beckett and Mime, 1963

Happy Days is a useful touchstone for considering the impact of Beckett's interest in mime on his drama in general. As is well known, the French premiere of *Oh les beaux jours* took place at the Odéon-Théâtre de France in 1963 with Roger Blin serving as director and Madeleine Renaud in the role of Winnie.[7] Less often commented upon is the fact that Renaud's husband, Jean-Louis Barrault, played the role of Willie. Though he harbored suspicions about his suitability for Beckett's drama, Barrault subsequently performed in several of his other plays, taking part in a Beckett season at the Théâtre Récamier in 1970 and, perhaps most significantly, performing the silent roles in *Ohio Impromptu* and *Catastrophe* in 1983 (Knowlson, 509-10, 605-06). But Barrault was not the only mime involved in the original *Oh les beaux jours*. Two decades before he directed the original production of *En attendant Godot*, Blin had studied mime, during which time he met and studied under Barrault, even appearing in several of his productions (Aslan, 15-18, 161). The original Odéon *Oh les beaux jours* came about because of this previous Blin-Barrault connection. Blin's background in mime also suggests an alternative, though complementary, explanation for the convergence of mime and Beckett's drama, one that originated in performance rather than on the page.

Given this context, it is perhaps no coincidence that Beckett's second period of intense interest in silent drama took place in 1963, when he worked on both "J. M. Mime" and "Mongrel Mime," as well as writing the script for *Film*.[8] One of the most striking aspects of the

two abandoned works is that Beckett labeled both as mimes, though they involve speech. "J. M. Mime" consists of three parts: an opening silent section that in its focus on geometric movement resembles the later *Quad*, a dialogue between two characters, and a monologue. "Mongrel Mime" centers on the movement of a single character between three boxlike rooms as he obeys commands uttered by an offstage voice. By identifying both works as mimes, Beckett signaled his awareness that mime was not strictly limited to silent performance. However, the crucial role of Beckett's early mimes in enabling him to develop a corporeal performance aesthetic in several genres is an even better demonstration of his relationship to Copeau, Decroux, and Barrault.

Notes

1.   It is important to remember that the stylization of *Godot* was largely a product of Beckett's extensive rethinking of the play when he began to take an active role in its production.

2.   For more on French mime, see Barrault, Dorcy, Felner, and Leabhart.

3.   On clowning, see McManus (71-89); on silent film comedies, see Knowlson (377); on Heidegger, see Butler (36-38); on Wolfgang Kölher's experiments, see Rabinovitz (97-98).

4.   For more on "Mime du rêveur A" see Admussen (110); Cohn (2001, 210-11); and Gontarski (25-31). For a holograph of Beckett's draft, see Gontarski (195-98).

5.   Dated 27 August 1957, this letter is quoted in Zilliacus (3) as epigraph.

6.   See Harmon (81-108).

7.   For more on *Oh les beaux jours*, see Cohn (2003).

8.   See Cohn (2001, 276-80). For a holograph of "J. M. Mime," see Gontarski (1985, appendix C).

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ACTES SANS PAROLES, PAROLES SANS SCÈNE

Manako Ôno

Owing to the declared absence of spoken words on stage, each of the *Actes sans paroles I* and *II* appears to consist of lengthy stage directions describing a series of actions tending toward an end that is going to shed meaning on them. However, this program contains a certain number of disruptions that go counter the obvious signifying intention, a situation with parallels in morality plays. These abnormalities are further emphasized by the linguistic nature of the description "without words." My analysis of these malfunctions leads me to reconsider the concept of the 'absurd' as it has been generally applied to Beckett's theatre.

À en croire leur titre, les *Actes sans paroles* sont des pièces sans 'paroles.' Non qu'elles ne contiennent aucun élément langagier: simplement, sur scène, aucune réplique n'est prononcée, les événements (gestes, rapports d'espace) sont de l'ordre du visuel. Comme dans une pantomime, en somme, ou un spectacle de mime (genre revendiqué au début d'*Acte sans paroles II*), ou encore dans un ballet sans musique, puisque aussi bien, dans les deux cas, le texte imprimé est nommé "argument."

Par ailleurs ces deux pièces se définissent comme des ʿactes.' Le mot joue sur deux tableaux. Pour une part il désigne une division du spectacle théâtral, traditionnelle depuis l'Antiquité latine et susceptible d'être isolée en moment dramatique autonome (la 'pièce en un acte'): par là le texte de Beckett affiche d'emblée son appartenance générique, sans que le titre semble apporter quant au contenu d'autre information que littéraire ou technique. Mais d'autre part, le mot 'acte' véhicule dans la langue ordinaire un autre sens, qu'un dictionnaire courant définit comme "l'ensemble des mouvements adaptés à une fin, chez l'être vivant" (*Le Robert*). Les actes ne sont donc pas de simples mouvements, mais des gestes, ou plutôt tout un appareil de gestes destinés à produire un effet particulier, une transformation des choses: après l'acte, l'état du monde n'est plus exactement le même et c'est par cette

tension vers une telle fin que l'acte devient acte. Les mouvements de l'acte visent à quelque chose: ils sont inscrits dans un projet.

Qu'un acte soit accompagné de paroles ou non, il prend donc sens par le projet même dans lequel il est inscrit. Avant que l'acte soit achevé, la fin atteinte, l'éventuel spectateur est donc amené à formuler quant à celle-ci un certain nombre d'hypothèses, à se livrer à des interprétations sur la place que chaque geste occupe dans la réalisation de ce qu'il suppose être le projet final. Le public des *Actes sans paroles* est donc mis en situation d'interprète d'un événement privé de langage, un peu comme il le serait devant une peinture ou un film muet.

Or, s'il arrive à la pantomime d'avoir recours à des mouvements conventionnels pour exprimer des notions abstraites, constituant ainsi une sorte de vocabulaire gestuel (par exemple un ovale autour du visage pour représenter la beauté), les gestes d'*Actes sans paroles I* et *II* ne se présentent pas ainsi. Ils sont au premier abord aussi dénués de sens que ceux de la vie quotidienne, qui ne s'adressent en général à personne. Par ailleurs, dans les deux pièces, les humains ne sont pas seuls convoqués pour l'accomplissement de l'acte: des objets, des machines y participent, y tiennent un rôle de premier plan et pourraient même en être dits les acteurs principaux. C'est une interaction d'objets et de personnages qui se déroule sous nos yeux. Un monde, un univers nous sont présentés d'une manière muette. Je voudrais essayer de montrer comment opère cette interaction en apparence 'absurde' et qui ne l'est évidemment pas.

S'ils sont des actes, ces mouvements et ces gestes sont donc censés être la réalisation d'un programme, auquel la présence ou l'absence de langage articulé ne doit rien changer. Au lieu d'être exprimé par le langage, ce programme le sera par une suite d'événements portant sur les objets du monde: ce sont ces événements, dans leur succession et leurs relations internes, que l'observateur, en l'occurrence le spectateur, aura la charge d'interpréter pour reconstituer le programme, en retrouver la finalité, au bout du compte en comprendre le sens. Les objets du monde occuperont alors la place qui, dans le langage, est celle des signes et des énoncés: ils se trouveront en quelque sorte transformés en signes, à partir desquels le spectateur formulera des hypothèses d'interprétation pour tenter de les déchiffrer. Ces éléments feront ainsi l'objet d'un processus de symbolisation. Or nous avons affaire à des pièces de théâtre: par définition, la série de ces signes ou de ces symboles produira un événement sur la scène.

Pour cet événement, le mot de 'symbole' au sens strict ne convient plus: il ne s'agit pas d'une pure équivalence statique entre deux objets, par exemple le coq pour la France ou un sablier pour le Temps. Les objets symbolisants, qui sont de simples objets du monde (des ciseaux, un arbre ou des sacs) sont pris dans une action qui tient compte de leur nature et se poursuit de manière autonome dans le temps: l'arbre déploie ses branches et fournit un peu d'ombre, les ciseaux servent à couper, plusieurs choses différentes, et pourraient avoir encore un autre emploi. Ce déroulement d'un système symbolique dans le temps fait apparaître une allégorie: autrement dit un récit dans lequel un ensemble d'objets qui sont eux-mêmes et autre chose sont inscrits dans un parcours tendu vers une fin. Comme tout récit, celui-ci possède donc un début, un milieu et une fin. On reconnaît la définition d'Aristote: mais on voit également que, des fins, en l'occurrence, nous en avons deux.

Car la 'fin' dont parle Aristote dans la *Poétique* se confond ici avec la finalité du programme, le but vers lequel est tendue l'action et pour lequel tout est préparé dès le début. Les signes produisent un programme dont l'intentionnalité n'est pas claire jusqu'à la fin de son déroulement. C'est précisément cette obscurité qui invite les spectateurs à se livrer à l'interprétation. Les 'actes' offerts au regard, tant qu'ils n'auront pas été accomplis jusqu'au bout, mettent en jeu des hypothèses sur chacun des éléments qui les composent.

Au théâtre, il est un genre par excellence qui recourt à l'allégorie: c'est la moralité, genre florissant au quinzième siècle, "caractérisé par son propos moralisateur et par la forme allégorique de ses personnages," qui "met en scène, d'une manière satirique, les dangers et les conséquences du vice, ou la récompense d'une vie vertueuse et chrétienne" (*Encyclopédie Universalis*). Évidemment, il serait difficile de voir un 'propos' moralisateur dans les *Actes sans paroles* et la référence chrétienne semble également y manquer.

Pourtant ces deux petites pièces ne sont pas sans relation avec le genre de la moralité. Cela tient d'abord au caractère emblématique des personnages: dans *Acte sans paroles I*, le protagoniste est simplement appelé "un homme" (95) au début de la pièce. Sans autre 'qualité,' sans même un nom propre (les deux personnages d'*Acte sans paroles II* seront du moins distingués par une lettre de l'alphabet), réduit à sa seule humanité, il est ensuite constamment désigné par le seul pronom "il," y compris lorsque la grammaire le permet difficilement: "Un petit arbre descend des cintres, atterrit. Une seule branche à trois mètres du

sol et à la cime une maigre touffe de palmes qui projette une ombre légère. Il réfléchit toujours" (96).

Dans ce passage, la logique grammaticale voudrait que le pronom 'il' renvoie à ce 'petit arbre' deux phrases plus haut, seul mot masculin du contexte. Or ce n'est évidemment pas l'arbre qui réfléchit. Le pronom 'il' se comporte donc comme un véritable nom propre désignant le seul personnage en scène, nom vide, qui peut être rempli par tout un chacun, *Everyman* ou *Jedermann*, et représente indifféremment toute l'humanité. L'allégorisation du personnage commence ainsi par son nom, précisément parce qu'il n'est pas un nom: de ce 'il' tout au plus peut-on dire qu'il n'est pas une femme (on connaît l'ambiguïté des pronoms personnels, avec laquelle Beckett joue également dans *Pas moi*, cette fois à propos du mot 'elle'). Le "il" d'*Acte sans paroles I* devient ainsi un être abstrait, ambigu et allégorique.

Avec le genre de la moralité, ces *Actes sans paroles* présentent une autre affinité, qui tient à leur caractère passif et à la nature particulière de leur fable, proche à bien des égards de la peinture de vanité.

Dans les deux pièces, les personnages semblent à la merci d'une entité qui les dépasse. Dans *Acte sans paroles I*, dont l'action est scandée par des coups de sifflet en coulisse, la dimension verticale est même soulignée: les objets descendent des cintres avant d'y remonter, comme s'ils "tombaient du ciel," puis y étaient "rappelés," pour reprendre des expressions du langage ordinaire qui gardent la trace d'une transcendance proprement religieuse. Le personnage d'*Acte sans paroles I* reçoit des ordres ou subit des tentations qui lui viennent d'en haut. Dans *Acte sans paroles II*, c'est "l'aiguillon" qui tient le rôle du sujet agissant, forçant les personnages humains à sortir de leur sac pour accomplir des gestes que leur répétition prive en eux-mêmes de toute finalité propre. Il est notable que cette pièce se termine en outre d'une manière ambiguë par l'image d'un homme en prière: "A sort à quatre pattes du sac, s'immobilise, joint les mains, prie" (109).

La passivité à laquelle sont réduits les personnages humains donne à la morale de ces deux fables une tonalité qui les rapproche du genre pictural de la vanité: qu'ils subissent les tentations malignes d'un ciel qui leur retire aussitôt ce qu'il a paru leur proposer ou qu'ils soient soumis aux injonctions d'un pouvoir sur lequel ils sont sans prise, les hommes agissent toujours pour rien, leurs efforts sont vains, le résultat de l'entreprise aboutit à zéro. Dans *Acte sans paroles I*, après avoir vainement essayé plusieurs fois d'atteindre une carafe d'eau, le personnage ne réagit plus aux coups de sifflet. La carafe descend et

s'immobilise à un demi mètre de son corps comme pour le défier, mais l'homme "ne bouge pas" (101). La carafe descend encore et "se balance autour de son visage," sans provoquer plus de réaction. Cette absence de réaction aux mouvements provocants de la carafe montrent que le personnage a fini par renoncer complètement à l'idée d'obtenir l'objet qu'il convoitait: peinture en acte de la vanité du désir.

Dans *Acte sans paroles II*, les hommes sont forcés par les piqûres de l'aiguillon à accomplir des mouvements qui constituent le résumé d'une journée de leur vie: lever, toilette, repas, prière, coucher. Ces actions sont exécutées d'une manière différente par les deux personnages, sans que cette individualisation apparente traduise aucune différence réelle dans la nature de ces gestes, dont la répétition montre le caractère routinier et qui sont en outre inscrits dans un système au déroulement infini. La disposition des sacs et leur déplacement, l'apparition d'un second aiguillon en tout point semblable au premier fabriquent une machine dont rien n'indique qu'on assiste à la première mise en fonction, non plus qu'à la dernière: ce qui a sans doute commencé dans la coulisse de "droite" se poursuivra dans celle de "gauche." Le spectateur ne saisit qu'un moment d'une chaîne dont les éléments ne contiennent rien en eux qui laisse présager leur fin. La fable semble claire: les actes de notre vie n'ont pas de sens, ne vont nulle part, se poursuivent. Encore une fois, peinture de vanité qui rapproche ces deux pièces du genre de la moralité.

Il est cependant une dimension des *Actes sans paroles* sur laquelle je voudrais attirer l'attention. Cette allégorie opère sans le secours direct du langage pour qui assiste à une représentation théâtrale, mais pour un lecteur, le livret de ces pièces, leur argument se comportent comme une longue didascalie, écrite dans une langue articulée, avec des phrases et des signes qui sont ceux du français ou de l'anglais. Pour qui en lit la description, cette 'moralité' beckettienne sans parole n'est faite que de langage. Or l'écriture même du texte n'est pas sans effet sur le déroulement de l'action.

On a déjà remarqué en effet qu'alors même que chacune des deux pièces souligne avec insistance la matérialité scénique de l'action (le sifflet, dans *Acte sans paroles I*, de longue date lié à la machinerie théâtrale, ou la circulation latérale d'une coulisse à l'autre dans *Acte sans paroles II*), les indications destinées à permettre la réalisation dramatique ne sont pas toujours précises: étonnante à cet égard est l'utilisation des termes 'droite' et 'gauche' (du point de vue des spectateurs) là où les praticiens parlent de 'cour' et de 'jardin.' Sans le schéma visuel

inscrit à la fin d'*Acte sans paroles II*, il serait difficile de savoir dans quel sens se produit l'action.

Plus remarquablement encore, certains effets d'écriture, apparemment ludiques, ne trouvent aucun répondant dans l'événement scénique. Ainsi des ciseaux qui descendent des cintres dans *Acte sans paroles I* et qui sont, nous dit-on, des "ciseaux de tailleur." La première utilisation de ces ciseaux par le protagoniste va à la fois les détourner de la fonction qui leur a donné leur nom (couper du tissu) tout en conservant le verbe qui lui est appliqué: l'homme "lève la tête, voit les ciseaux, réfléchit, les prend et commence à se tailler les ongles" (96). Or on ne se 'taille' pas les ongles. Il y a là un jeu de mots qui ne peut être accessible qu'au lecteur du texte, et qu'aucun spectateur ne pourrait vraisemblablement reconnaître. En scène, on ne voit qu'un homme en train de se couper les ongles. Pour minime qu'elle soit, la variation suffit à assurer la différence de fonctionnement entre l'allégorie telle qu'elle se produit au théâtre et le texte qui prétend la décrire et ne renonce pas aux prestiges du langage.

Le cas contraire n'est pas moins troublant, lorsque le langage utilisé dans le texte ne peut produire un sens explicite qu'une fois l'acte accompli sur la scène, moralité comprise. C'est en particulier le cas du mot 'aiguillon,' qui joue un rôle capital dans *Acte sans paroles II*. En français, ce mot désigne au sens propre un "long bâton muni d'une pointe de fer servant à piquer les bœufs pour les stimuler" (*Le Robert*). Un lecteur s'attendrait donc à un instrument manipulé par une main d'homme, et non à l'appareil relativement complexe, monté sur un chariot, que décrit la suite du texte. L'aiguillon (*goad right* dans la version anglaise) ne fait pas sens par lui-même: il n'acquiert la légitimité de sa désignation qu'après avoir agi, lorsqu'il "s'immobilise un instant, se fiche dans le sac, se retire, reprend sa place à trente centimètres du sac" et provoque ainsi le réveil des personnages qui y sont enfermés. Si l'aiguillon porte son nom, c'est effectivement qu'il aura servi à 'aiguillonner,' qu'il aura servi 'd'aiguillon' pour l'action, mais au sens figuré et non plus au sens propre, à travers la référence à un certain nombre d'expressions toutes faites ('l'aiguillon du désir,' etc.). Or le lecteur ne le comprendra qu'au bout de l'action même: quant au spectateur, on peut se demander comment il pourrait appeler cette étrange machine s'il éprouvait le besoin de lui donner un nom.

De la même façon le langage met aussi en place des éléments qui échappent à une détermination dramatique précise. Ainsi *Acte sans paroles I* commence-t-il par deux lignes qui constituent la description

du "Personnage: Un homme. Geste familier: il plie et déplie son mouchoir" (95). Ce "geste familier" qui caractérise le personnage et paraît lui conférer une ébauche de personnalité est en même temps très étrange: car si le mouchoir figure bien dans "l'argument" de la pièce, on n'y trouve en revanche plus aucune mention du pliage ou du dépliage. On peut bien sûr voir dans ce motif un écho des autres pièces de Beckett (notamment *Fin de partie*), mais dans l'ouvrage même dont nous parlons, un élément utilisé dans la présentation du personnage n'apparaît plus jamais sur la scène, ou tout au moins plus jamais dans cette description de l'événement dramatique que constitue la didascalie. Sans doute peut-il s'agir là d'une action *ad libitum*, laissée à la liberté de l'acteur ou du metteur en scène ; il n'en reste pas moins que cette information demeure exclusivement réservée à des lecteurs (et même, plus précisément, aux lecteurs francophones, puisque cette mention a été supprimée dans *Acts without words*, écrit un an après la version française). Cet événement développé par le langage échappe du même coup à l'allégorisation produite au cours de la pièce.

Les lecteurs ne sont pourtant pas toujours en situation privilégiée. Dans le texte des *Actes sans paroles*, certains éléments de l'économie du langage sont eux-mêmes soumis à une transformation qui rend leur finalité ambiguë. Ainsi, dans *Acte sans paroles I*, les quatorze coups de sifflet dont j'ai déjà parlé n'ont-ils d'autre caractérisation que celle de leur provenance. Leur sens précis, la manière dont ils sont utilisés évoluent au cours de la pièce: injonction à l'action au début de l'ouvrage, ils deviennent bientôt un simple moyen d'attirer l'attention, lorsque le personnage, plongé dans sa réflexion, n'a pu assister à l'arrivée d'un nouvel objet de tentation. À la fin de la pièce, c'est aussi en pure perte que le 'coup de sifflet en haut' continue à se faire entendre: la vanité des actions humaines a dépassé le plan humain pour atteindre à la fin le principe même de l'action.

De la même façon l'expression "Il regarde ses mains," répétée par trois fois sans aucune précision, ne laisse-t-elle pas d'être imprécise, du point de vue même de la symbolique gestuelle: quel côté de ses mains cet homme regarde-t-il? L'interprétation est sans doute assez différente selon qu'il s'agit du dos des mains ou de la paume. Surtout, la valeur du geste dans l'économie de l'action est très différente à chaque fois: dans la première occurrence, il s'agit d'un mouvement machinal qui, selon une interprétation simple, permet au personnage de découvrir qu'il a les ongles trop longs. À la seconde apparition du motif, en revanche, les mains sont devenues le moyen d'utiliser un des derniers instruments

dont l'homme croit qu'il reste en sa possession: les ciseaux, avec les-quels il médite visiblement de se trancher la gorge. Enfin, quand ce geste se reproduit pour la troisième et dernière fois, achevant également la pièce, il reste suspendu dans une indécision que rien ne pourra plus venir lever: est-ce encore en tant qu'instrument que l'homme regarde ses mains, instrument de suicide ou d'autre chose, le dernier instrument qui lui soit laissé, et qui ne pourra lui être enlevé puisqu'il fait partie de son corps? Ou bien s'agit-il d'un désespoir moins actif encore: l'amorce du geste de pleurer dans ses mains? Ou d'une absence même de tout sentiment, une contemplation vide et à peine extérieure? L'ambiguïté reste totale.

Après avoir vu le fonctionnement du langage dans cette espèce de moralité, je voudrais maintenant examiner le modèle sur lequel est construit le monde de ces deux pièces.

Pour être simple, c'est-à-dire claire et propice à l'interprétation, la moralité a besoin d'opérer sur un nombre d'éléments limité. La ten-dance à réduire les éléments convoqués sur la scène n'est certes pas exceptionnelle chez Beckett, mais dans les *Actes sans paroles* elle ap-partient à une nécessité de structure et prend un caractère systématique. Ainsi est constitué un monde sans parasite, visant à être univoque pour être mieux compris. À cette dimension s'ajoute encore le caractère 'dé-sespérant' des deux fables, que l'absence de toute alternative, de toute obscurité rassurante vient encore renforcer.

Bien qu'elles n'aient pas été écrites en même temps, le fait que les deux pièces portent le même titre, et surtout qu'elles soient numérotées, invite à les considérer comme un ensemble cohérent. Et l'on voit en effet qu'*Actes sans paroles I* et *II* utilisent le cadre scénique et la boîte même du théâtre de façon à en épuiser l'ordre des dimensions et à for-mer un véritable diptyque. La première de ces pièces est commandée par la verticalité: les objets descendent des cintres, puis y remontent; les deux tentatives du personnage pour quitter la scène par les coulisses soulignent l'impossibilité de la circulation latérale. En revanche, la deuxième pièce insiste sur la dimension horizontale: les sacs se dépla-cent de 'droite' à 'gauche' (pour les spectateurs), dans un mouvement dont j'ai déjà dit qu'il semblait n'avoir pas de début ni de fin marqués. Dans *Acte sans paroles II*, le peu de profondeur de la scène fait même l'objet d'une mention spéciale et de tout un dispositif sur le plateau, comme pour mieux interdire une troisième dimension. Demi-droite tendue vers la hauteur ou droite filant à l'horizontale, ces deux dimen-sions confèrent à l'espace scénique un statut entièrement différent, et

qui évolue d'une pièce à l'autre: du "désert" religieusement connoté comme lieu de tentation, dans *Acte sans paroles I*, à l'abstraction d'un lieu sans profondeur, mais chargé des marques de la culture et de la civilisation (vêtements, ciseaux, carotte, lasso...). Les deux pièces se complètent ainsi par leurs différences.

Ainsi s'établit une mécanique susceptible de fonctionner par elle-même, en-dehors de l'humanité, même éventuellement contre celle-ci. Or cette mécanique sans autre objet que sa propre perduration a pour caractéristique d'être amenée à se gripper. Ce dysfonctionnement est visible dans *Acte sans paroles I*, où il participe même de la 'morale' de la fable: il faut que le personnage, qui dans les premiers temps réagissait aux tentations offertes, finisse par y renoncer pour que soient complètement exprimées les déceptions et la vanité du désir. Dans *Acte sans paroles II*, en revanche, le dysfonctionnement est infiniment plus discret. On a vu que la structure de la pièce établissait un mouvement de répétition infinie. Cette infinité même fait partie du sens: c'est justement la répétition qui prive chacun des gestes accomplis par les deux personnages de leur singularité, et donc de leur valeur propre. Or le caractère infini de cette répétition est mis en danger, et même condamné à terme, par un tout petit détail: la carotte, placée dans la poche du costume que les deux hommes enfilent à tour de rôle et dont chacun d'eux croque une bouchée. Peu importe que l'un le fasse avec plaisir et l'autre avec dégoût: la carotte mâchée par B – qui "sort la carotte de la poche de sa veste, mord dedans, mâche et avale avec appétit..." (108) – est la même que celle qu'avait croquée A et qu'il pourrait croquer à nouveau après la prière sur laquelle se ferme le rideau. Une carotte n'est pas infinie: comme toute chose du monde, elle est soumise à l'usure, mais il s'agit en l'occurrence d'une entropie 'en acte,' qui a lieu devant les yeux des spectateurs, sous forme de consommation. Cette carotte, si j'ose dire, est le grain de sable qui, de toute façon, ne pourra manquer d'arrêter à brève échéance le mécanisme de la répétition, jouant ainsi contre la structure allégorique évidente de la pièce.

Les deux 'moralités' présentées en diptyque par ces *Actes sans paroles* aboutissent donc à présenter un monde étrange, fait d'objets qui sont autant de signes et dont l'usage se donne à interpréter comme des sortes d'énoncés. Le monde est donc plein de sens: et tel est le paradoxe auquel aboutit ce théâtre qu'on a nommé 'de l'absurde.' Ce n'est pas la finalité, la signification, la transcendance qui manque apparemment aux choses. C'est précisément par un trop-plein de sens que les *Actes sans paroles* présentent un monde insupportable.

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BORDERLESSNESS :
LIFE AND DEATH / BEGINNINGS AND ENDINGS

Toru Tezuka as Hamm and Akira Emoto as Clov, in *Endgame* (in Japanese), directed by Makoto Sato, Setagaya Public Theatre, Tokyo, 2006 Photograph by Futoshi Sakauchi

AN END TO ENDINGS:
Samuel Beckett's End Game(s)

S. E. Gontarski

As it is in *Waiting for Godot*, the preoccupation of Samuel Beckett's *Endgame* is bluntly announced in its title. The play begins with Clov's announcing its end. Hamm will later summarize the play's opening words about ending as if beginnings and endings have not so much been reversed as redoubled, the play ending where it began, with its ending. One complication in this *Endgame*, then, is not that the play has no ending, but that it has too many, or that it has only endings. This paper then explores Beckett's game of perpetuated endings and its implications for theatre.

> If happiness or if, in some sense or other, a reaching out for new happiness is what holds the living onto life and pushes them forward into life, then perhaps no philosopher has more justification than the cynic.
> Nietzsche, "On the Use and Abuse of History for Life"

> No, there are no accidents in *Endgame*, it is all built upon analogies and repetitions.
> Beckett in Berlin, qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld

Those of us who spend much of our professional lives exploring the profound depths of Samuel Beckett's work need on occasion to remind ourselves of its direct simplicity, often signaled by the unexpected bluntness of Beckett's titles. *Waiting for Godot* is, after all, a play about waiting, which may be the most common social activity of our lives. It is an image of life on hold, as it were, where indeed we spend most of our lives. The French title of the play, *En attendant Godot*, accents the burden of waiting in its title more directly than does the English. The title might well have been rendered into English as *While Waiting for*

Godot (as it is in Japanese), but Beckett omitted the adverb from his English translation. The titular emphasis on time, 'while,' may have resonated more with those members of the French audience who may remember a popular brand of chewing gum sold through Parisian metro vending machines for many years with the slogan, "En attendant…" (While waiting...). The two-word teaser focuses attention on the inaction of waiting, in this case for a train at least, and hints at some remedy to the implied boredom of nothing happening. But if one were on "A country road" and not in a station, as the text tells us Vladimir and Estragon are, one might well wait forever for that train, with no chewing gum to break the boredom and help time pass. What then to do while waiting on that road, and, of course, therein lies much of Beckett's innovation, turning the most ordinary of human activities into the extraordinary, turning life's simplest action on its head, inaction as the action of our lives. And so the waiting for Godot is not prelude to some major event or action; it is that event or action itself.

The characters of *Endgame* are, quite simply, still waiting, if only for an end to waiting, as Hamm shouts, "Then let it end! [...] With a bang" (130). If end does indeed come in this play, it does so not with a bang but a whimper, to borrow the climactic phrase from T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Hollow Men." Like its predecessor, the preoccupation of *Endgame* is bluntly announced in its title, which Beckett thought to hyphenate as *End-Game* until just before the American text went to press. The play begins with Clov's announcing that end as almost a direct pronouncement to the audience (for, after all, whom else might Clov be addressing, since the rest of this happy family sleeps): "Finished, it's finished, nearly finished, it must be nearly finished," he tells us. It is a recitation from the play's opening words of what Hamm will summarize at the end, as if beginnings and endings have not so much been reversed as redoubled, the play ending where it began, with its ending. One complication in this *Endgame*, then, is not that the play has no ending, but that it has too many, or that it has only endings. Hamm may say: "It's the end, Clov, we've come to the end. I don't need you any more" (131), but he might say this at almost any point in the play. Moreover, he also tells us that "The end is in the beginning," and knowing that, somehow, "you go on" (126). That sense of doubled endings may call to mind one of Beckett's favorite jokes: everything has an end except, goes the punch line, the sausage. It has two.

It takes us some while into the play to realize such doubleness, the doubling of endings, that is, Clov opens the play not only with its first

ending, but with a plagiary as well, making his announcement in words not his own. At the very beginning of *Endgame*, the *Beginning to End*, as Beckett thought to call a series of recorded readings by one of his favorite actors Jack MacGowran, Clov is already an echo of innumerable other games, of countless previous performances, of speech he has heard with uncountable frequency, as we hear it 'as if' for the first time. Like most actors, Clov, an actor playing an actor, is mouthing the words of another. If Hamm were awake, he would certainly realize that his carefully crafted diction has been appropriated, if the words were Hamm's to begin with, and that Clov may be rehearsing his future, on stage, before us, like an understudy anticipating his turn to sit on the throne and make such grandiose pronouncements: "preluding" Beckett called such performance in anticipation of performance in *The Unnamable* (381). The implication from the play's first words is thus of a possible succession, a turn from the steady decline of life already catapulting toward its end from its beginning, to a return to the end that is a beginning, some form of (or mockery of) regeneration, if only in the recycling of words and images, as in all theatrical performance. Like all actors, Clov has almost no language of his own, is always already an echo.

From his opening announcement of an end, Clov might then offer some exposition, some detail of what exactly is finished: the morning ritual, the day itself, which has apparently just begun – if days begin or end at all in this world without end – with the unveiling, though Hamm wants to be recovered, to go back to sleep, that is, to end the day, almost immediately once he's awake. But exposition suggests a middle, something that comes between a beginning and an end. With only end or ends, there is no place for a middle. What comes in the middle are perhaps more ends.

More apocalyptically, Clov announces (or repeats Hamm's vision of) an end to their physical existence, to all physical existence, to time itself? That would be the "bang" Hamm so desires since it would be a retrospective look at the whole of a life and so give it some meaning. And Clov might offer an explanation of daily life in the shelter, the "day after day" alluded to in the play, if he had a language or voice of his own. But he does not, and such a revelation is simply not written. Clov can, of course, only restate what is already written, or at least given. The biblical injunction in John 1.1 that "In the beginning was the word" might be read, with only a slight shift of emphasis, as "In the beginning was the word, there already." Instead of exposition, then,

Clov repeats additional stolen language, Hamm's metaphor of the grains and the heap, a philosophical paradox: "Grain upon grain, one by one, and one day, suddenly, there's a heap, a little heap, the impossible heap" (93). The allusion is admittedly arcane; nonetheless, it provides much of the underpinning to this play. The mantra that Clov has absorbed and now reiterates is the paradox of the part and the whole, that is, that the part is already the whole, or that the whole has nothing to add to the smallest part, the single grain already the heap, the single instant of experience already the whole of a life. As Hamm puts it: "Moments for nothing, now as always, time was never and time is over" (133). Clov's repetition of the metaphor – Hamm's or the Eleatic sophist Zeno's, "that old Greek" (126), or whomever Zeno is echoing – renders the issue of time in terms of wholeness, as a heap of grain: at what point does one separate grain added to other separate grains add up to a discrete singularity that we might call a heap? At whatever point we agree on heapness, its definition relies on the one, single grain, the last grain added. Subsequent grains add nothing to that notion of heapness, except perhaps to extend it, to enlarge it, to repeat it. In the literary echo of the paradox, we are left to ponder the paradox of the literary fragments: at what point do separate fragments, without clear end, perhaps, added to other fragments, also without end, add up to what we might call a work of art, a play, perhaps, or in Hamm's case a life chronicle, that is, at what point is Hamm's story finished, ended? At what point does it, like his life, achieve a wholeness, a totality, its heapness. Hamm himself states the paradox in terms of ontology: at what point do separate moments of existence, piling toward a heap, finally add up to a life. "And all life long you wait for that to mount up to a life" (126), he muses. That conception of not just the metonymy or synecdoche, the part, some part, representing the whole but, more radically, the part as coeval with the whole, informs much of Beckett's art of the fragment, an art of incompletion, an art for which endings are superfluous since they already exist in the instant of beginning. Hamm's repetition of the paradox at the end of the play, then, underscores the fact that Clov's opening is already Hamm's end, Hamm speaking as if already from the dead, as the imagery of Makoto Sato's recent Tokyo production suggests with its frail, sickly Hamm. (Newly translated into Japanese by Professor Minako Okamuro, Beckett's play was staged by Makoto Sato at Tokyo's Setagaya Public Theatre at the time of the Borderless Beckett Centenary Symposium.) Later Clov snaps at Hamm's objection to his language with, "I use the words you taught me.

If they don't mean anything any more, teach me others. Or let me be silent" (113). Here Clov is again an echo, a multiple reverberation, this time including Caliban's malediction to Prospero in *The Tempest*: "You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how to curse: The red plague rid you / For learning me your language!" (1.2.365-67). Being always already an echo, Clov apparently is without substance, has no being of his own because he has no memory except that written by Hamm; that is, Clov has what memory Hamm has supplied for him in his forgetting. Clov's history and so his memory are simply Hamm's afterthought. If they happen to agree on memory at all, it is, as Malone tells us in *Malone Dies*, an "agreement [that] only comes a little later, with the forgetting" (217).

 With the final themes already established at the opening (one hesitates to say beginning), with the dumb show, the twin, almost symmetrical opening monologues, and the sequence of five unveilings, the play moves into its dramatic conflict, the tempo of which Beckett, as director of his own play, described to his actors thus: "There must be maximum aggression between them from the first exchange of words onward. Their war is the nucleus of the play" (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 205). One trope Beckett used to express that war is a hammer (Hamm) driving three nails: Clov (from the French *clou*), Nagg (from the German *Nagel*), and Nell (from the English nail). Asked directly by his German cast if *Endgame* is a play for a hammer and three nails, the circumspect Beckett would only respond, "If you like" (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 238). Mother Pegg, whose light has died, as Hamm's is dying, might constitute a fourth beaten nail. Furthermore, in the symbolism of Beckett's art, hammers and nails almost always echo Christ's passion. Throughout the play, then, all the banging, including Hamm's tapping on the wall, Nagg's tapping on Nell's bin lid, Clov's tramping his booted feet, echo the theme of human suffering but ultimately of Christ's crucifixion, a death that itself was not a death, an ending that entailed a new beginning, at least for some believers. Another time Beckett explained the Hamm-Clov relationship in terms of fire and embers or ashes, one character agitating the other, and from that stirring of embers flames flare afresh. Clov's goal throughout these conflicts is withdrawal, retreat: to his visions, to his kitchen at least, but on this day, which appears to be different from the others because the grains of millet may have reached a critical mass, the impossible heapness, or the seconds of human existence may have added up to a life, the impossible life, which is evident only at its ending, in retrospect,

only at or after its finale, after the curtain falls. Clov's larger goal is, finally, escape, from Hamm to his kitchen at least. But Hamm stirs the embers, "outside of here it's death" (96), he tells his servant. Hamm's goal is then to detain, and thereby to retain his lackey in his place (in both senses of that term), and so, like the characters in *Waiting for Godot*, Hamm and Clov are "ti-ed" to this spot, and to each other, and, faced with the prospect of filling time, they abuse each other. As Beckett told the original Clov, Jean Martin, "You must realize that Hamm and Clov are Didi and Gogo at a later date, at the end of their lives" (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 163).

Hamm has another means of passing the time *en attendant*, his narrative. "It's time for my story" (115), he announces. In Beckett's direction it was clear that Hamm's chronicle too is already a repetition, the recovery or creation of memory, and so a set piece for performance with four distinct voices: "First Hamm carries on a monologue," Beckett told his German cast, "second, he speaks to the beggar he is imagining lying at his feet, third, he lends the latter his own voice, and he uses the fourth to recite the epic, linking text of his own story. Each voice corresponds to a distinct attitude" (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 205). This lending of his own voice is apparently his gift to Clov as well, and "His own story" is Hamm's struggle not to forget the memory to which all can agree. That is, Hamm struggles to create a world that is predictable. The atmospheric reports sprinkled amid his monologue are to be spoken, according to Beckett, as though they were filler while Hamm is inventing or remembering the next episode of his story (as in history), thinking about how to continue it. The meteorological statistics give the story its shape, suggest a formal, circular structure to the tale, 0-50-100, then back to 0, another end already in the beginning. The return to zero may foretell the play's potential end, and so perhaps the end of existence, of humanity, but at the same time, the return to zero suggests a loop, the possibility of a new cycle, zero the beginning of the number system, not an absence but the starting point of all numbers, the cipher pregnant with infinite numeration.

Dramatically, the cyclical theme is developed with Clov's sighting, or his feigning sight of, a small boy, who potentially can enter the shelter to replace Clov, who may replace Hamm, who may replace Nagg: something, in short, is taking its course. The sighting of the boy seems to be Clov's appropriation of what was, heretofore, Hamm's story. Clov has made earlier attempts to write or co-write the story (and so his history) by telling Hamm more of the boy in the story, "He

would have climbed the trees" (122). But with the sighting of the boy, he seems to have taken charge of the narrative, and so of memory. He (Clov) now lends the latter (Hamm) his own voice, the pronominal ambiguity of which suggests that the voice that Clov is lending to Hamm is Hamm's to begin with, if it too is not already an echo. In the cycle that we call theater such a change may also suggest a cast re-placement in performance, and it is a change for which Clov has been preparing, that is, rehearsing, from his opening monologue.

The performative nature of Hamm's chronicle is also evident in his need for an audience to witness his performance and so to validate his story (and thereby his existence as well), and it brings to the fore the theatrical metaphor for the entire play, the 'game' or 'games' in *End-game*, which is, after all, play about a play. Hamm is always in need of an 'other,' an audience. Alone as a child, Hamm needed another, some-thing like a Clov-like factotum. Solitary and lonely, the young Hamm needed a witness to his "babble, babble, words," and so had to turn "himself into children, two, three, so as to be together, and whisper together, in the dark" (126). Hamm thus creates an audience for him-self. Beckett returned to the dialectical image of creativity in *That Time* (1976) where the protagonist of narrative A describes hiding as a child, "making up talk breaking up two or more talking to himself being to-gether that way" (393). The repetitions (the French term for rehearsals, after all) of dialogue and action suggest that the characters are caught in a play, in a Möbius strip of narrative, in a chamber where there are only echoes. Clov threatens departure with the phrase: "What is there to keep me here?" (120-21). Hamm answers, "The dialogue," then cues Clov to the next set exchange for which each has a part already written: "I've got on with my story" (121). Clov is needed more as a witness, a subject, an audience than as a domestic. Nagg and Nell, Hamm's "ac-cursed progenitor[s]" (96) evidently, no longer function in life (hence their relegation to dustbins) except that on occasion they too are needed to witness Hamm's performances and so certify to his living, or to wit-ness his dying. And Nagg's music hall story of the tailor, complete with multiple voices, needs Nell's audition and so parallels Hamm's need for an audience.

On this extraordinary day, in a world where nothing is left to change, where nothing can change, in its essence, where everything seems to have run out, especially pain-killer (a palliative mentioned seventeen times in the play), something 'has' changed, as Clov ob-served from, or even before, the raising of the curtain: Nell dies and a

flea appears, one life simply – symmetrically – replacing another. The lowly flea then terrifies Hamm as he shouts: "But humanity might start from there all over again" (108). As terrified of ending as he is that a purported rat in the kitchen might nibble his flesh, Hamm has a corresponding fear, that of not ending, that is, of a cyclical, recurrent, monadic, repetitious existence. Critics have long noted the anti-creation themes in *Endgame*; Hamm, an echo of Ham, the cursed son of Noah, fears that the whole cycle of humanity (and so suffering) might start anew from the flea, and so all this suffering, his own and humanity's, may have come to naught but a repetition, his suffering too a repetition and a rehearsal. And the setting, the shelter, takes on the qualities of Noah's ark, from which, according to Christian mythology at least, humanity was restarted, repeated, as if the antediluvian period were mere prelude or rehearsal.

Although Hamm fears an actual end, the greater fear is that what appears to be an end may signal only a new beginning. In the earlier, discarded, two-act version of the play, a Clov-like B reads directly an excerpt requested by the Hamm-like A, from *Genesis* 8.21-22 and 11.14-19, the story of Noah, and Beckett apparently re-read those passages during the play's composition. Dissatisfied with the passage, A asks for another, and B reads from the generations. The emphasis on procreation excites A sexually, and he calls for one Sophie with whom he too might beget. But when a barely disguised B appears as Sophie, eager for coitus, A demurs for fear of procreation. Although Beckett cut such overt material, it remains as a trace or afterimage in the flea scene, while Hamm's desire for sexual gratification remains implicit: "If I could sleep I might make love" (100). The threat of cyclical existence is also suggested by the play's chess imagery since one outcome in the endgame is stalemate as well as checkmate. And in the theater, of course, action resumes in almost exact repetition the following night. The final irony of the play (in both senses of that term) is that while Hamm has been resisting the end, he is finally coming to terms with finality, ready to say, "yes," to the nothingness, by the end of the play as he commences his own re-veiling with the stauncher. The gesture is belied, betrayed, by Clov's silent, unresponsive presence, his continued witness to Hamm's ending, a persistence that suggests at least one more turn of the wheel may remain. If Hamm comes finally to accept his end, which may validate if not exalt his suffering, he may be deceived yet again. Clov may have outplayed him in this "end game." Each moment is already a life, subsequent moments merely repetitions in a series; the

whole show will (must) resume again at each moment. It is a series that cannot end despite Hamm's apparent resolve. Clov's presence thus thwarts Hamm's (and the play's) ending. It is Clov's best joke, one that itself must be validated by an audience.

Or is the joke on Clov? Early critics have observed that the set of *Endgame* suggests the inside of a human skull, the action thus a mono-drama. What appear to be discrete characters may merely be aspects of a single consciousness: Hamm as reason, Clov his senses, and Nagg and Nell memories and dreams. As such, Clov could not simply walk away, as Hamm well knows, no matter how often he threatens to do so. The retreat from the physical word into the shelter echoes the solipsistic retreat (perhaps of an artist) into the recesses of the mind, only to find that it proves no retreat since consciousness, perception, and memory are themselves unreliable and conflicted rather than unitary and serene. If the mind offers asylum, it does so in the dual sense of Beckett's favorite paradox since the word suggests both haven and incarceration.

But I began this analysis with a discussion of the direct simplicity of this play, and have wandered instead into its complexities. But it is the complexity of the simple examined more closely than it has been heretofore. Moreover, despite the emphasis on the self-reflexive, the play's turning back on itself like an uroboros, the play devouring itself in the playing, many of Beckett's comments as a director have tended to return us to the play's more naturalistic qualities. What is surprising is that this paragon of avant-garde theater asked his actors in Berlin for a realistic presentation: "the play is to be acted as though there were a fourth wall where the footlights are," he told them (qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 204). While, on occasion, Beckett would say, "Here it oughtn't to be played logically," more often he would provide direct logical motivation. For the line "Have you bled," he told his Clov, "You see something in his face, that's why you're asking." Examining the parasite in his trousers provides Clov with the occasion for asking Hamm, "What about that pee?" (108). Hamm's "Since it's calling to you" should be choked out to trigger Clov's response about his voice, "Is your throat sore?" (127, qtd. in McMillan and Fehsenfeld, 232). And Clov's opening speech is motivated by some barely perceptible change that he appears to perceive while inspecting the room. In his theatrical notebook, Beckett wrote: "C perplexed. All seemingly in order, yet a change" (195).

When Beckett was directing *Endgame* with the San Quentin Drama Workshop in 1981, I watched the rehearsals for two weeks. It

was not unusual for visitors to be invited to sit in for a day or so, and one of those visitors was the American author Larry Shainberg, who had just published a book called *Brain Surgeon: An Intimate Look at His World* (1979). He sent it to Beckett, and Beckett subsequently invited him to sit in on rehearsals of *Endgame* in London. During the break Beckett asked me to join him and Shainberg for lunch, which consisted of a glass of Guinness on a bench along the Thames River outside the Riverside Studios. It was clear that Beckett was fascinated with the intricate details of Shainberg's book, and had read it carefully, as he asked Shainberg innumerable questions about the techniques and repercussions of brain surgery. Most of the discussion focused on the implications of cerebral hemorrhages and the recently developed surgical technique of using a clip to seal the burst blood vessel. The surgical results were amazingly free of all side effects, except that each of the patients reported a continued sensation that something was dripping in their head. Shainberg was amazed that Beckett had intuited such a condition of aneurisms well before the current surgical technique was developed. For Shainberg, thus, much of *Endgame* was at least framed by neurological impairment and its resulting paralysis.

For many of us then the play is at once simple and complex, realistic and self-referential, literal and symbolic, and that duality, that interplay of opposites is evident in Makoto Sato's staging. For one, he has turned the master-servant or father-son relationship on its head by casting a Clov older than his Hamm, so that in this cycle of performance they have almost switched roles. And Makoto-san has delayed Clov's final entrance until after Hamm's final monologue, lest Hamm's final words be upstaged. But Clov remains present in his absence, that presence symbolized by the open door. That sense of something present but invisible, that present absence, is evident in the lighting as a thin line of light accents the (stage) right wall and ceiling. It creates something like a mystical glow. Later the effects get more overt with cosmological lighting overlays that make explicit a sort of latent mysticism evident at the opening. From the opening aura of light to Clov's presence suggested by the open door, an intriguing, almost mystical, perhaps even Japanese mood pervades the closing moments of the drama, this in keeping with the spirit of Hamm's final monologue, where he transforms Baudelaire's poetic voice into, if not strict Haiku, certainly a poem in the spirit of Haiku: "You cried for night; it falls: now cry in darkness."

Where finally this theatrical exploration of endings begins or ends, then, one cannot exactly say. But I do suspect that if we return tomorrow to this same place, at the same time, we may witness the game played yet again. And will the outcome be different tomorrow, or the day after, or the day after that? Will Clov have gone by tomorrow, or will he have replaced Hamm in the chair at the next showing? These are the questions the play, suspended in its irresolution, leaves us with. Will tomorrow be different? Well, we will just have to come back to see. What one might say is that *Godot* may indeed arrive at some point, perhaps on a third (or subsequent) day.

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PLAYING WITH DEATH IN *MALONE DIES*

Julie Campbell

The focus of this discussion of Beckett and play will be on D. W. Winnicott's theories of childhood play and his contention that play continues as creative activity in adult life. I will be relating his ideas to Wolfgang Iser's theories on reader response. This will lead to a consideration of Malone at play, in the roles of narrator, creator and protagonist in *Malone Dies*, and the ways in which playing involves the reader, not only in the creative activity he describes, but also in the experience of his dying.

> Now it is a game, I am going to play. I never knew how to play, till now. I longed to, but I knew it was impossible. And yet I often tried. I turned on all the lights, I took a good look round, I began to play with what I saw. People and things ask nothing better than to play, certain animals, too [...]. I shall never do anything any more from now on but play. No, I must not begin with an exaggeration. But I shall play a great part of the time, from now on, the greater part, if I can. But perhaps I shall not succeed any better now than hitherto. Perhaps as hitherto I shall find myself abandoned, in the dark, without anything to play with. Then I shall play with myself.
> Beckett, *Malone Dies*

Samuel Beckett plays with narrative elements and the conventions that have become familiar to readers over time, and in this way he also plays with us, his readers. Beckett offers pleasure. He challenges us to think, and rethink certain prejudices and traditions, and this seems to me to be a genuinely useful procedure in itself. I want to focus on his ability to make this creative participation on the part of his readers an enjoyable activity, always surprising, and enduringly fascinating, even when, as in the case of *Malone Dies*, he is dealing with such a disturb-

ing subject matter, and one that we must all experience in the end: death.

Angela Moorjani, in her recent article "Beckett and Psychoanalysis," considers that Winnicott's ideas can usefully be discussed in relation to Beckett's work: "Given the relatively few studies that draw on Winnicott's work, one hopes that scholars will be encouraged to build on the scintillating possibilities suggested" (181). Peter L. Rudnytsky writes more generally about how "Winnicott's ideas remain comparatively unknown among those in the universities – mainly, but not exclusively, literary scholars – who are drawn to psychoanalysis and employ it in their work" (xi). He is surprised by this neglect, as he, like Moorjani, recognizes the opportunities for valuable explorations of both the act of writing and the act of reading that become possible by bringing Winnicott's theories into discussions of literary texts.

Winnicott's most well known terms are 'transitional object' and 'potential space.' The first refers to the objects like security blankets or teddy bears that infants cuddle and comfort themselves with. They are transitional in that they are situated in between the self and the mother, or, in other words, between self and other. The potential space is the place of play, where the child plays with the transitional object, and which Winnicott contends becomes the space of creative activity as the child grows into adulthood. For Winnicott the space of "creative playing" and "cultural experience, including its most sophisticated developments" is in this same "*potential space* between the baby and the mother" (1971, 107; emphasis in the original), where a child first begins to play, the space of "interplay between separateness and union" (1971, 99). Gabrielle Schwab speaks of how "all literary texts are, in a sense, transitional" as all "cultural objects are the descendants of [...] 'transitional objects'" (18); however she has chosen to use the term "transitional texts" to describe those texts that focus on the "transgression of boundaries" (18). For the child the transitional object has a crucial role: Murray M. Schwartz describes both the "unity" and the "separateness" that is held in a dynamic and productive tension through the symbolization of the transitional object in the potential space:

> The transitional object represents *both* the unity of the child and [her/]his mother (external world) *and* their separateness. In developmental terms, we create such symbols as we grow to recognize and seek satisfaction of personal needs and desires. As children we

begin to live in a potential space, as we learn to use physical distance between ourselves and our mothers, as we learn to play.

(59; emphasis in the original)

The potential space is an intermediate area, an in-between space, in which infants are able to adjust to the recognition that they are not omnipotent, but that there is a separation between the self and mother, or self and other, but at the same time a bond.

In *Subjects without Selves: Transitional Texts in Modern Fiction*, Schwab borrows the word "transitional" in her subtitle from Winnicott. The experimental texts she discusses "all aim at changing familiar habits and modes of reading" (ix). She makes this analogy between experimental texts and Winnicott's concepts very clear:

According to Winnicott, transitional objects that develop the infant's capacity for symbolization are precursors to cultural objects. Even later, after the capacity to distinguish between self and other and to form object relations is acquired, the subject still uses the transitional space to play with its own boundaries by constantly undoing and reshaping them. Free from the pressures of the reality principle and unchallenged by reality testing, the subject can produce illusions of sameness and difference in a protected space, a no-man's-land between I and Not-I.

(29)

A crucial feature of child's play and of adult creativity is that they take place in an in-between space. The space of play is in this intermediate area, the "*potential space*" which is "not *inside,*" but neither is it "*outside*" (Winnicott 1971, 41; emphasis in the original). This helps to explain how artistic creation can be inventive and original (it is not simply relating to external reality) and how it can at the same time allow others to share in the play (it is not simply relating to inner psychic reality). And "the boundaries of this transitional space are fluid," writes Schwab, "since the infant – and later the adult – keeps drawing them anew in response to internal or external demands" (28). This idea of play, as regards the child and the adult, as a means of undoing and reshaping boundaries is crucial here; Beckett, when discussed in the context of Winnicott's theories on play, can be termed 'borderless' in relation to the way he is constantly challenging and blurring pre-existing lines of demarcation. He is playing with the reader's expectations and

creating something new in textual terms, but also encouraging the reader to rethink, redefine and re-experience within the fluid borders of their own transitional spaces.

I will consider Beckett's creation of narrative as a play space, specifically in relation to *Malone Dies* (1956), and explore Winnicott's idea that adult creativity "is in direct continuity with the play area of the small child" (1971, 13). The point here is that in the play activity experience is removed from the real and re-experienced in a virtual, 'potential' space in which the player can have control, and in this way crosses existing borderlines, and exists, in a sense, in a 'borderless' space. It is a transitional, interstitial space in which the player can be creative and reshape experience.

Carlos Ruiz Zafón has one of his characters in *The Shadow of the Wind* suggest that "Books are mirrors: you only see in them what you already have inside you" (171). This needs some qualification, but I do want to take up this idea in order to discuss further the proposition that the literary text is a transitional object, a potential space of shared play, and to relate Winnicott's ideas about play with Wolfgang Iser's theories concerning aesthetic response. Winnicott refers to Lacan's 1949 paper on "the use of the mirror in each individual's ego development" and suggests that "*the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face*" (1971, 111; emphasis in the original). The quotation from Zafón's novel can suggest a largely passive relationship between text and reader, but the relationship between the baby and the mother is dynamic and interactive, which is analogous to Iser's contention that in reading there is a "*dynamic* interaction between text and reader"; for "it is in the reader that the text comes to life" (1978, 107, 19; emphasis in the original). The mother's face mirrors the baby's, and "what the baby sees is himself or herself" (Winnicott 1971, 112). This, for Winnicott, is "the beginning of a significant exchange with the world, a two-way process in which self-enrichment alternates with the discovery of meaning in the world of seen things" (1971, 113). This mirror is not passive. Winnicott relates the experience of the "child's seeing the self in the mother's face" to psychotherapy, which he describes as "a long term giving the patient back what the patient brings" (1971, 117). It is not exactly true that readers are patients and texts are psychotherapists, of course, but it is a useful way of thinking about the interaction between readers and texts as dynamic, meaningful and enriching. The literary text, like the psychotherapist, can have the mirroring role of the mother: the mother "reflects some sense of what the child experiences, and the child first

learns to know itself by the mirroring activity of the mother" (Hutter, 82-83). A literary text, alongside many other kinds of artistic creation, is able to provide a similar role in increasing a reader's understanding of the relationship between the inner self and the outer world. Literary texts are mirrors in the sense that they can facilitate our ongoing self-definition. There can be recognition on quite a superficial level, but there can also be a new awareness and discovery of hidden areas of the self on a much deeper level.

Narrative play takes place in the creative act of writing, but, even more crucial to my discussion, is the extratextual play space, in which the creative play takes place between the literary text and the reader. When a reader enters the picture a new, extratextual play space is apparent: another enters into play. Of course this other is an essential player; without this other no shared play could be taking place: without a reader a text cannot 'live,' cannot provide pleasure. As Iser contends: the "*dynamic* interaction between text and reader" (1978, 107), brought about through the reading activity, cannot be produced by the text alone. Neither can the text be produced solely by the reader: Iser considers that "Reading is not a direct 'internalization,' because it is not a one-way process" (1978, 107). Thus, in reading, a play space opens up; a space between self (reader) and other (text) which Iser describes in a way intriguingly similar to Winnicott's description of the intermediate area of experience in which both child's play and adult play take place. For Winnicott, as we have seen, this transitional space is neither inside nor outside; for Iser the space of "*dynamic* interaction" cannot be identical either with the text or the reader, "but must be situated somewhere between the two. It must inevitably be virtual in character, as it cannot be reduced to the reality of the text or the subjectivity of the reader, and it is from this virtuality that it derives its dynamism" (1978, 21).

The reader brings into play her or his own creative perception of the world. There are blanks in the text, "but," as Paul Auster contends, "the mind won't allow these things to remain blank; it fills in the details itself; it creates images based on its own memories and experiences – which is why [literary texts] resonate so deeply inside us" (140). Iser puts forward the view that play "continually acts out difference" (1993, 257). An equally strong case can be made for the idea of play as acting out sameness, in terms of the reader's active participation. The literary text, like a mirror, is encouraging identification. For the reader the self is as if reflected in the text, but often in ways that are not straightforward. Auster suggests that "Writing, in some sense, is an activity that

helps me relieve some of the pressures caused by [...] buried secrets. Hidden memories, traumas, childhood scars – there is no question that novels emerge from those inaccessible parts of ourselves" (123). This also, to a very great extent, explains why readers read. The process of self-discovery, of coping with existence, is ongoing. Winnicott writes that, "the task of reality-acceptance is never completed, that no human being is ever free from the strain of relating inner and outer reality, and that relief from the strain is provided by an intermediate area of experience" (1971, 13). But in a sense Iser's "need to familiarize the *unfamiliar*" (1978, 43; emphasis in the original) can fit in here, in relation to the recognition of the "buried" and the "hidden" that Auster refers to: self-discovery involves surprises and unexpected revelations. If Zafón's idea of the book as a mirror only meant that "you only see in them what you already [*know* you] have inside you," reading would be a dull exercise, and have nothing in common with the excitement and magic of play.

The title of *Malone Dies* suggests to the reader that the narrator/protagonist of the text is dying, just as the opening lines suggest that this will be soon: "I shall soon be quite dead at last in spite of all. Perhaps next month" (165). It is a surprising beginning, redolent with the sense of ending. So why does the reader read on? If the literary text is like a mirror or a transitional object, how can it be reflecting the reader's state or help with the relationship between self and other, that seemingly never ending process, when it is clear that in death this process must end? But the text does hold fascination for the reader. It is unusual for a literary text to force us to face the certainty of our own death so bleakly. The narrator/protagonist is dying, alone in his room, completely alone, and unable to move. What is the fascination here? I would suggest that this scenario, although repressed, is very present to us. We know we will die one day; we may well find ourselves alone and dependent. And we know, deep down, that we have experienced this before: when we were small, in our cots, frightened and alone. Adam Phillips describes how Winnicott considers that the "fear of death" is a fear of what has "already happened": "the psychic death of the infant" (20). This occurred because of the "absence of the mother," a situation that "was beyond the infant's capacity to assimilate. It was included as part of the infant's total life experience, but it could not be integrated, it had no place" (Phillips, 21). Such an experience can be forgotten, but not lost: "it is useful to remember that everyone has been a child. In each adult [...] there is the whole memory of [her or] his

infancy and childhood, both the fantasy and the reality, in so far as it was appreciated at the time. Much is forgotten but nothing is lost" (Winnicott 1979, 20). We are encouraged to relive and re-experience our fears of annihilation when reading *Malone Dies*.

We can recognize something familiar in the unfamiliar: our infancy and dependency, as well as those feelings of omnipotence that were disillusioned as we matured, but can be returned to in play. Winnicott contends that: "*Playing is essentially satisfying*. This is true even when it leads to a high degree of anxiety" (1971, 52; emphasis in the original). "The unconscious," he suggests, "is something that each individual wants to get to know, and play, like dreams, serves the function of self-revelation, and of communication at a deep level" (1979, 146). Thus, we can play with our fears, even our fears concerning isolation, extreme disability and eventual death. Phillips tells us that Winnicott "had wanted to be present at his own death. He feared the death he might not experience, the death that might happen without him being alive to it" (20). To be wholly present at our own death is impossible, but play does make the impossible possible. In a sense our identification with Malone allows this experience to happen. We witness Malone dying, face our own fears of death, and experience death within the safety of our potential space.

In the second paragraph of *Malone Dies*, directly after the narrator's recognition of his imminent death, he introduces his decision that "now [...] I am going to play" (166). It is interesting that dying is made analogous, right from the beginning, with the early stages of life. His situation strongly parallels the situation of an infant: he is bed-bound and seems to have regressed into an infantile state, and envisions further regression: "Perhaps as hitherto I shall find myself abandoned, in the dark, without anything to play with" (166). Dying and infancy, the ending and beginning of life, are blurred and confused together, just as Winnicott suggests that our fears concerning dying relate directly back to our childhood when we found ourselves "abandoned [alone] in the dark."

Malone Dies foregrounds interactive narrative play. The text begins by setting the scene of the narrative situation; the situation in which the act of creation takes place, where the writer writes. There are two main levels of discourse: the level of the story of the narrative situation, where Malone 'plays,' and the embedded level of the stories: the result of Malone's 'play.' He is waiting for death, and this also gives him the *raison d'être* for his narrative play: "While waiting I shall

tell myself stories, if I can" (165). He writes about these stories as "play" (166). He is "going to play," going to create stories in order to pass the time while waiting for death.

There is an overriding sense of Malone's regression to a childhood state. He plays, and his play entails writing in a "big child's exercise-book" (252), and he writes about "the whole of second childishness," a state he appears to inhabit (214). The sense of regression is enforced by images of birth that he writes of as if it were imminent. It is as if he is going backwards: "Sometimes I miss not being able to crawl around any more" (171). He is confined to a bed, has a pot to eat from, a pot to defecate in: "What matters is to eat and excrete. Dish and pot, dish and pot, these are the poles" (170), and these factors point very strongly to a return to infancy. Death is envisaged as a second birth; the world is imagined as giving "birth [...] into death" (260): "the world parts its last labia and lets me go" (174), or he himself is swelling with child (259), or it is the room that is like a womb, as "The ceiling rises and falls, rises and falls, rhythmically, as when I was a foetus" and there is "a noise of rushing water" as if the waters have broken and birth is just about to happen (259-60): "All is ready. Except me. I am being given, if I may venture the expression, birth to into death, such is my impression. The feet are clear already, of the great cunt of existence. Favourable presentation I trust. My head will be the last to die. Haul in your hands, I can't. The render rent" (260).

Alongside these images of regression are those that point to the omnipotence experienced in childhood. He has power over the materials, his transitional objects, in his stories. He suddenly stops his story of Sapo: "I stop everything and wait. Sapo stands on one leg, motionless, his strange eyes closed. The turmoil of the day freezes in a thousand absurd postures. The little cloud drifting before their glorious sun will darken the earth as long as I please" (179). And, godlike, he decides to "make a little creature, to hold in my arms, a little creature in my image, no matter what I say. And seeing what a poor thing I have made, or how like myself, I shall eat it" (207). The image is of an omnipotent deity, creating and destroying, loving and then despising, and finally consuming what he has created; it also suggests a child and his transitional object: a toy, like a little doll, to hold and cherish, and then to have contempt for and destroy.

The ending of *Malone Dies* does not provide the conclusive, conventional ending the reader would expect a traditional fictional text to provide. Death is a traditional ending for many narratives, but the meta-

leptic play of *Malone Dies* achieves something far more involving for the reader. We are not placed outside the death as detached observers, but become as if a part of it on both the narrative and the diegetic levels. As the prose breaks down, it begins to assume the characteristics of poetry, and there is an eloquence and sadness in this broken, halting syntax, as the text ends and simultaneously 'fails' to end. The emphasis is on loss and absence: loss of words, absence of control, and the manifest lack of a neat denouement, with the ends left untied. The thread of the narrative is broken, and the reader is left with an absence: "never anything/there/any more" (264), which reminds her or him remorselessly that there is nothing more to come; the text breaks off into silence. What Beckett could be said to have achieved here is something that is simultaneously frightening and magical: he has brought us face to face with death; he has recalled the memory of it from our unconscious – and we have survived.

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UNE MISE AU TOMBEAU:
la terre beckettienne dans *Oh les beaux jours*

Régine Bruneau-Suhas

By way of her burial, Winnie commits herself to the profounds of the world. Slumbering, she dreams of her death within the earth while obsessively manipulating her everyday objects. The earth-wrapper ends up by letting everything go; it opens up a theatrical habitat par excellence – the tomb itself that welcomes death in order to give a life of sorts – in the theatre. It is useless to count on a waning horizon to resuscitate Beckett's world. What Beckett shows in *Oh les beaux jours* is artifice clearing a passage for a fictional horizon situated between a suspended life and a certain death.

Le roc, la roche mère est à l'origine de la terre; elle subit toutes les influences de l'eau, de l'air, des êtres vivants qui, en un temps immémorial, la transforment, la désagrègent, l'altèrent et donnent peu à peu naissance "à une formation superficielle meuble" (Goguel, 807) évoluant elle-même "jusqu'à une sorte d'équilibre plus ou moins précaire." C'est dans cette terre que Samuel Beckett choisit d'ensevelir son personnage Winnie dans *Oh les beaux jours*. La matière terrestre est soumise à d'éternelles transformations et elle ne cesse jamais de travailler: "Et qu'un jour peut-être la terre va céder, tellement ça tire, oui, craquer tout autour et me laisser sortir. (*Un temps.*) Tu n'as jamais cette sensation, Willie, d'être comme sucé?" (40). La terre ponctue abondamment le quotidien; elle éveille le désir d'être touchée, malaxée, travaillée: "*Elle se met à tapoter et à caresser la terre*" (35). Le mamelon tumulaire s'inscrit dans une image de rondeur propre à susciter la rêverie enfantine d'édification de mille châteaux de sable. La terre se donne à la scène beckettienne, impudique et forte de tout le réel d'une matière primitive, à l'intimité d'une relation matérielle de travail et d'action. Gaston Bachelard développe les images de la matière terrestre en une dialectique du dur et du mou; "la *terre* […] a comme premier caractère

une *résistance*." Il ajoute que la terre peut être rêvée sans aucune "am-
bivalence de douceur et de méchanceté" (10-11).

Le ventre de la terre

Par l'acte de son ensevelissement, Winnie s'engage dans la profondeur
du monde, en conquistador matériel de la terre: "*Winnie enterrée jus-
qu'au cou […]. La tête, qu'elle ne peut plus tourner, ni lever, ni bais-
ser, reste rigoureusement immobile […]. Seuls les yeux sont mobiles*"
(59). Le monde clos s'oppose ainsi au monde ouvert et à l'air libre.
Winnie, par son corps enfoui, entre dans la multitude de l'ancien monde
des particules de la matière, en partance pour un jardin enfoui dans
l'infini silence des choses. Elle s'enfonce dans le dédale matériel de
notre roche mère transmuée en terreau théâtral, "Ça pourrait être le noir
éternel. (*Un temps.*) Nuit noire sans issue " (72). Winnie en terre assiste
à sa propre dévoration. Le corps de Winnie chute, pesant. Il s'enfonce
dans un devenir silencieux et néantisé, dans "l'isomorphie des images
de la profondeur" (Bachelard, 14). Il transgresse toutes les réalités,
foudroie toutes les particules, sombre dans une avalanche de matières
mélangées vers l'abîme de la terre. Winnie en vie rêve sa mort à
l'intérieur de la terre, endormie. Elle finit de s'inclure à la masse pe-
sante des grains colmatés, elle participe aux formes naturelles et aux
soulèvements futurs d'une construction légendaire. Le corps de Winnie
joue avec le corps de la terre. Il prend possession d'un territoire et le
monde devient un jouet cosmique. L'acte de l'ensevelissement de Win-
nie engage une rêverie terrienne. La didascalie (62) fait référence au
globe. La vie suspendue se déverse en un mouvement arrêté vers une
destinée pétrifiante. L'effroi d'être clouée par l'impitoyable dureté de la
mort motive Winnie à combattre l'immobilisme de la pierre. La terre
colonisée découvre la démesure de l'être qu'elle vient d'ingurgiter.
Winnie avance en terre, aveuglée par la matière, dans un paysage loin-
tain de sa mémoire et reste vivante par les petits objets du quotidien
qu'elle manipule avec obsession: "Une vie. (*Sourire*.) Une longue vie.
(*Fin du sourire*.) Commençant dans la matrice, comme au temps jadis,
Mildred se souvient, elle se souviendra, de la matrice, avant de mourir,
la matrice maternelle" (66). Winnie découvre un pays qu'elle a déjà
traversé, des géologies connues qui la firent naître avant de la perdre.
Ses yeux restent ouverts, mais elle va à tâtons dans l'obscurité du
monde; le pied se reconnaît, la main contemple et donne consistance à
la longue anamnèse qui précéda sa naissance. Le passage terreux pro-
pose les mensurations idéales d'un cocon maternel, d'un ancien lieu

déjà habité mais oublié. Le ventre de la terre s'ouvre au passage de Winnie mi-vivante mi-morte, en voyage dans une nature en passe de se retourner en un jardin nourricier, abreuvant les morts d'une retrouvaille entrecoupée de crainte et de terreur. Winnie s'ancre dans la terre, qui, selon Christophe Colomb "a la forme d'un sein de femme" (cité dans Pelegrin, 68). Winnie en terre laboure la terre-mère du haut vers le bas, introspectant et fouillant en taupe à l'œil atrophié, le sol vierge d'un nouveau monde, celui du théâtre. Elle part en exploratrice, percer les abysses infernaux d'une terre des morts, découvrir l'énigme d'un autre signe de vie. La terre propose le dessin anthropomorphique de cette image du corps selon les antiques typologies d'Hippocrate et de Galien "qui faisaient du ventre une cinquième partie du corps liée à la fécondité" (cité dans Pelegrin, 69). L'analogique terre primitive cherche à incorporer le corps androgyne de Winnie dans la diversité de ses particules: "Ça pourrait être le froid éternel. (*Un temps.*) La glace éternelle" (63). La terre rudimentaire assimile le corps beckettien pour le rendre un jour au monde, ou le garder en l'état pour l'éternité.

Happening

La terre déposée sur la scène beckettienne confirme la matière dans une fonction d'objet entré en performance de mort, dans le sens où elle contribue à la quasi disparition de ladite scène et de son personnage Winnie. "L'acte d'effacement" (Kantor, 120) de l'espace scénique s'intègre au projet de mise en re-présentation qui donne l'acte de vie. En même temps que vide et silence sont recherchés, la mort se remplit par pelletées, infuse le plancher de la scène et l'enracine dans un geste artistique manifeste. La scène ne peut s'échapper de sa mort propre car le contact de la terre confirme que la mort est dessus et dedans. L'acte de vie est ramené à un pur geste répétitif restreint par l'enfermement partiel de Winnie en terre et fait alterner des moments incessants de vie futile et de mort mêlés. La terre-emballage finit par tout éliminer et ouvre l'habitat théâtral par excellence, ultime tombeau qui accueille la mort pour donner une sorte de vie – d'autre vie – au théâtre. Le happening propose une réalité "toute prête," artistique, sans jamais se départir de la masse qui seule en fait l'intérêt, ou "la 'pâte' de notre vie de tous les jours […] en les laissant mener une existence autonome, se dilater et se développer librement" (Kantor, 160). Le happening terreux domine totalement la scène afin qu'elle ne puisse plus s'inscrire que dans un processus créatif et inventif. La terre est l'obstacle, la contrainte maximum à l'apparition d'une certaine forme de vie, dans le cadre d'une

vraie confrontation entre deux réalités, l'une illusion théâtrale, l'autre réalité scénique, pour finalement ne jamais cesser de les unir et de les séparer. "C'était / une '*mesure*' / exceptionnelle / de l'imagination, / à l'aide de laquelle / la réalité / ordinaire / 'de la vie' / fut 'mesurée'" (Kantor, 177; souligné dans le texte). Le mamelon terreux beckettien intervient en tant que réalité tout à fait hors théâtre; il interroge la scène et prend le risque de la perturber, au point que, par son contact, il en vient à créer de nouveaux rapports. Kantor écrit que l'élément théâtral par excellence est le tourbillon de l'action scénique pure. L'action pour nous correspond aux seuls gestes de Winnie ensevelie dans la terre qui est l'acte par lequel elle dit qu'ici est la vie comme si le vœu le plus cher de l'art théâtral était, en tout premier lieu, d'appesantir, d'ensevelir, d'anéantir l'espace, comme si l'intention était d'envisager, de considérer la seule réalité de la matière terre au détriment d'une scène bien souvent tentée par l'illusionnisme. L'acte d'enterrer la scène (et le personnage, par là même) donne à la matière le pouvoir de désta- biliser le propos théâtral, et l'engage dans un commencement, un départ à zéro. La question, en ensevelissant la scène théâtrale, tourne autour d'un désir de faire exister, de donner vie à un espace vide, étranger, totalement soumis à la terre qui seule aujourd'hui détermine le sort du sol isolé. La scène, pour être attirée dans "la sphère de l'art" (Kantor, 74), pour exister en tant que telle, doit vivre recluse, cachée, et requiert l'action d'un rituel que nous fournit Winnie, totalement vouée à la terre qui la recouvre. "L'action même de l'*empaquetage* cache en elle un besoin très humain et une passion de la conservation, de l'isolation, de la durée, de la transmission, de même qu'un goût d'inconnu et de mys- tère" (Kantor, 75; souligné dans le texte). Chercher le degré zéro tel que l'entend Tadeusz Kantor offre à la scène sa propre autonomie, lui fait don d'une réalité propre. La terre et ce qui reste du corps de Winnie viennent lui offrir la force, l'adhésion d'une matière close et enclose dans les murs du théâtre. Ceci crée tout un champ de pressions, voire même d'oppressions du réel.

Le spectacle de la mort

Ainsi, le corps de Winnie repose presque totalement enseveli debout en terre "Tandis que si tu venais à mourir – (*sourire*) – le vieux style! – (*fin du sourire*) – ou à t'en aller en m'abandonnant, qu'est-ce que je ferais alors, qu'est-ce que je pourrais bien faire, toute la journée, je veux dire depuis le moment où ça sonne, pour le réveil, jusqu'au mo- ment où ça sonne, pour le sommeil?" (27). La plastique du corps de

Winnie dégage un fameux souffle de vie. Pourtant, l'espérance d'une vie future s'amenuise par la désolation du simple événement de cet enfouissement presque total. Le corps de Winnie érige la première statue et manifeste l'art sacré. Il reste en ce monde la grande scène funèbre liée à la vision d'un Gisant. Le drame de la vie de Winnie disparaît en terre et ne laisse présider aucun événement lié à une quelconque amélioration de son état et, en tout cas, n'en annonce aucun signe précurseur. Le spectacle inéluctable de la mort nous place dans le désespoir – désespoir inéluctable à moins d'affirmer l'espérance d'une autre vie, sans doute surnaturelle. La figuration plastique de la mise au tombeau de Winnie modifie l'ordonnance initiale du corps debout en vie et le pose à l'horizontal par son inclusion presque totale en terre. L'ensevelissement de Winnie entaille l'illusion d'un corps en vie pour ne retenir que la réalité corporelle d'un cadavre. La mise au tombeau donne le spectacle du dernier épisode de l'histoire humaine de Winnie. Ainsi s'éloigne le souffle sacré de la vie au profit de l'intention profane de la représentation de la mort. La présentation de la terre sur la scène n'imite pas, ne reproduit pas un cimetière, mais prétend modeler une autre réalité tenant compte du théâtre qui l'accueille, et la signifier "en se présentant comme système codifiable" (Pavis, 128). La représentation vient extérioriser le signe théâtral et donne le signal d'une vie autonome se formant très précisément. La réalité scénique donne le spectacle d'un univers dramatique, d'une mise en signes porteuse d'empreintes décédées, de traces de poussières mortes, imprégnant aussi le corps enterré de Winnie – ce que Pavis désigne comme signes de la théâtralité, parce que signes plastiques. L'intention est bien de garder pour le théâtre tous les signes de la mort et les traces identitaires beckettiennes. La terre est en quelque sorte codifiée pour que soit travaillée et malaxée la pâte d'une théâtralité en prise avec une importante plasticité: "D'où il apparaît que le signe théâtral se travaille comme un matériau et que toute mise en scène est mise en signes" (Pavis, 143).

Un rituel funéraire

Comment la scène réagit-elle en présence de la terre et en contact direct avec le mort-vivant, la mort et tous ses signes? Ce qui se passe au-dessus et en dedans soutient le fait qu'un rituel funéraire d'enterrement y est représenté, qu'ici nous assistons au même moment à une cérémonie de mise à mort du milieu théâtral. La terre sur la scène fait voir la mort. Le rite sacrificiel par lequel la terre fut entaillée pour y enfouir le corps de Winnie ouvre la mort. L'irreprésentabilité de la mort propose

du nouveau à tout un imaginaire de l'ordre de la terreur procurée par l'omniprésence du corps enfoui, peut-être même d'autres corps évanouis, de pseudo cadavres. Une fois préparée la scène mortuaire, le rite funèbre en final du deuil de la vie, ensevelit le corps beckettien dans une solennelle mise au tombeau, vient confirmer l'acte de théâtre par lequel la réelle présence de Winnie enterrée ici sur scène induit celles des morts présumés déjà inclus dans la terre. Bernard Deforge souligne "le caractère de rituel sacrificiel dionysiaque qui s'attache à la tragédie" (21). Dionysos est le maître d'un monde dont le haut est la surface de la terre. Il voyage du haut terrestre vers les bas-fonds d'un monde infernal, pour ensuite remonter vers l'espace au ras du sol. Dionysos est l'enfant de la terre qui porte en son sein des puissances infernales et dont nous pensons que le corps en terre de Winnie serait le bouc émissaire tragique. Le caractère de rituel sacrificiel dionysiaque s'attache tout particulièrement à la tragédie qui elle-même conserve un rituel de mort: "Ce que nous appelons la mort est ici l'étage inférieur du monde, le sein de Terre […]. Les athéniens semaient du grain sur la tombe où ils venaient d'ensevelir leur mort, pensant traiter le sein de la terre en sein maternel" (d'après Cicéron, cité par Daraki, 122). Pourtant, la nature paraît exister pour elle-même, et "le milieu est transformé par le symbole" (Daraki, 59). L'ensevelissement du corps de Winnie vient nourrir et se nourrir du corps de la terre à un niveau symbolique. La nature devient "surnature" (Daraki, 60). Le corps de Winnie puise son énergie dans le monde des morts. La terre en scène ne copie pas la nature, parce que nous n'attendons pas qu'ait lieu le cycle d'une végétation. Certes, le mort prend racine, le milieu est totalement investi dans un but créatif. La dépouille beckettienne, en tant qu'objet innommable, par son contact, dans le jardin profond, féconde la terre. Le rituel funéraire réalise l'union infernale, et Terre accoucha d'une image à la surface de son sol théâtral. Mais, nous sommes préoccupés par la question de la présence fondamentale de la vie en ce lieu de perdition qu'est la scène beckettienne dans *Oh les beaux jours*. Comment le monde vivant peut-il se manifester lorsque vraisemblablement nous assistons à la perte du lieu, et par voie de conséquence, à l'étrangeté d'une vie corporelle?

Commencement intermédiaire
Les relations entretenues au sein de la terre conduisent à une extrême fragmentation des corps et des matières. La perte commence de l'intérieur et finit par signifier de véritables déserts, des terrains vides,

arides et secs, où la vie ne se laisse plus saisir que sous la forme d'une tête, celle de Winnie, sortant de terre au deuxième acte, dernier vestige d'une vie qui a du mal à se tenir en vie: "(*Penchant la tête vers la terre, incrédule.*) On dirait de la vie!" Elle observe une fourmi. "Elle s'est terrée" (36). Certes, le tas, en tant que terreau des morts, continue de parler à travers ses amas. Ici, le lieu est l'expression majeure de la mort, de la destruction, et les mots manquent pour dire la vie. Cette terre n'a plus rien d'humainement dicible, si ce n'est le peu qui reste du corps visible de Winnie. Il s'agit pour Samuel Beckett de défier le paysage de la mort, de le transformer en un paysage habité par du vivant, comme une belle oasis en plein milieu d'une scène de théâtre. Mais, il ne peut s'agir que d'une oasis artificielle rassemblant autour de la demeure des couleurs inventant l'eau et une végétation inconnue ailleurs. Pour Samuel Beckett, cela peut être "la terre bien sûr et le ciel" (64). L'ordre ne peut surgir du tertre en l'état. Le monde de la vie s'associe localement à un lieu qu'il faut stabiliser dans lequel quelque chose de l'ordre de la mort se donne en re-présentation. Nous cherchons ainsi le moment au sens d'un commencement, dans la présentation sensible d'une vie ou bien d'une continuité de la vie qui empêcherait Winnie de sombrer au fond de la terre. La vie a-t-elle vraiment commencé, ou bien est-elle en train de finir? La terre sur la scène donne le matériau, la masse établit l'extrême soumission par laquelle le moment premier de la mort domine tout l'espace scénique. De sorte que l'apparence de l'ensemble favorise la pesanteur du tout en une accumulation inorganique. L'inorganicité désigne le premier moment théâtral comme figuration organique: "Cela revient en effet le plus souvent à la confronter à ce qu'elle n'est pas encore: adéquation, organicité" (Payot, 18). Le rien et le manque travaillent scéniquement tout en assurant le remplissage; la toute première construction scénique est un tombeau. La mort circule entre les planches de la scène; elle indique qu'ici est le passage, le moment où l'impossible est bousculé, peut-être même franchi. La mort joue l'intermédiaire de son propre dépassement, le bâtisseur de son propre tombeau. Le moment du commencement se situe dans cet interstice où s'engage un combat féroce entre le projet de vie théâtrale et le pas encore qui submerge la scène. La construction du tombeau donne la représentation de la mort, d'une fin qu'il nous faut rapprocher d'un début, d'un commencement. Le tombeau réunit la maçonnerie mortuaire et détermine le premier signe de la vie. Si le tombeau est bien la première habitation du lieu théâtral beckettien dans *Oh les beaux jours*, la mort et ses sujets en sont le commencement. Le mamelon, tumulus

scénique où se terre Winnie, intériorise la mort et ne représente que l'inorganicité de ses signes, ou bien "les hiéroglyphes de cette mort cachée" (Payot, 34). Le tertre a subi une séparation d'avec sa vraie nature; il transite vers la scène de théâtre qui elle-même exhibe la mort comme étant le signe essentiel théâtral – et en fait l'unique moment d'un commencement. La mort montre en même temps qu'elle cache, en un théâtre des opérations, inhume la scène et exhume ses signes en un geste sacré éminemment profane et théâtral. Le tombeau contribue à rassembler le peu qu'il nous est donné à voir de Winnie au sein d'un lieu sacré car tombal, autour duquel la mort profanée pose ses signes et se met en représentation; mais "l'inappropriable […], le silence des tombeaux – est déjà ce qui ne saurait encore être: […] tranquille assurance de la figuration organique. L'énigme doit déjà cacher en soi la préfiguration de sa relève […]" (Payot, 37-8).

La passe

La terre-substance transposée sur la scène beckettienne n'invite donc pas la vision à se perdre dans le lointain. Enclose, elle se découpe en ombres portées sur les murs d'un théâtre enfermé. L'horizon se clôt. Les murs du théâtre et le plancher de la scène arrêtent le paysage, réhabilitent la limite et jouent un rôle d'écran, de fond neutre sur lequel le monde observé se découpe. Le regard s'engouffre vers le bas et bascule dans les fonds terreux. C'est là que vient se perdre la perspective où sombre le paysage, dans un désolant appel de l'abyssal. N'est-il question que de se laisser précipiter dans les tréfonds vertigineux de la terre? Winnie n'aurait-elle déployé ses forces que pour échouer dans une recherche se dérobant sans cesse sous ses pas, tout comme l'horizon s'éloigne lorsque l'on veut s'en approcher en un pur néant, un vide, une béance donnant accès à l'incommensurable abîme du monde? L'horizon menace, vide et néantisé, de s'exténuer par le fond d'un paysage dans l'horizontalité de la scène, le laissant pour mort au sein d'un monde théâtralement effondré. L'espace terrestre de la mort pose le seuil d'un au-delà qu'il faut franchir. L'imagerie mortifère que nous avons développée à partir de l'ensevelissement de Winnie transforme l'horizon théâtral dans lequel elle gît en un vaste cercueil de solitude. L'ultime viduité scelle l'avenir d'un projet de re-présentation dont la perte de vie passée ne parvient pas à rétablir la souvenance. "Le souvenir est évanescent comme l'horizon; il n'offre qu'un fragile simulacre de présence" (Collot, 92). Le champ de l'Art peut ouvrir la porte de l'imaginaire – horizon et illusion résonnent sur le plan du pur paraître,

mais éviteront de naître dans l'attrait du simple mirage. L'humanité chemine inexorablement vers sa mort: "Il lui faut un leurre pour continuer à avancer, et l'horizon symbolise à merveille le caractère utopique et imaginaire de ce but qu'elle poursuit sans cesse" (Collot, 97). Chimères et mirages vont-ils à l'encontre d'un projet de re-présentation théâtrale, qui n'a de cesse pour Samuel Beckett dans *Oh les beaux jours* de se fonder dans la matière terre? Il est sans doute vain de chercher à l'horizon déchu de quoi réanimer le monde beckettien. Il est préférable de quitter la profondeur mortelle de la terre une fois que le pied en a touché le fond. Souvenons-nous que la terre n'ira pas plus bas que le plancher de la scène théâtrale. Le franchissement de ce seuil donne l'appui nécessaire pour remonter à la surface et faire la passe à l'imaginaire, seul apte à maîtriser le vide mortel qui fait vaciller l'horizon. Le recours à l'artifice ouvre le passage à un horizon fictif, créé de toute pièce, à la seule condition de ne jamais se départir de l'ancrage vital terrien dans lequel il se fonde et c'est bien ce que Samuel Beckett profile dans son œuvre théâtrale *Oh les beaux jours*.

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"SA NAISSANCE FUT SA PERTE"
ET LA PERTE SON APORIE:
Heidegger / Beckett / Derrida

Gabriela García Hubard

From *Malone meurt* to *L'innommable*, Beckett understood and undermined aporias that resonate with Heidegger's and Derrida's to the point that it is counterproductive to reflect on these aporias using the simple and classical negation of path. How does the writer keep the experience – passage and crossing – of the impossible from being a non-experience?

> Où situer le syntagme "ma mort" comme possibilité et/ou impossibilité du passage? (la barre mobile entre le et/ou, et-et ou/et ou/ou, est une singulière frontière, nous allons le voir, à la fois conjonctive, disjonctive ou indécidable).
> Derrida, *Apories*

"Birth was the death of him," autrement dit, "sa naissance fut sa perte," les premiers mots de *Solo* font résonner la récurrence beckettienne de l'accouchement "à cheval sur une tombe" (Beckett 1952, 117), ainsi que l'ambiguïté de la mort comme perte et irrésolution de la fin; et nous pourrions sans cesse citer Beckett dans ce rapport indissociable et problématique qu'il déploie, là où soudain, dit Malone, "on est perdu dans d'immenses fougères claquantes […] à se demander si l'on n'est pas mort à son insu ou né à nouveau quelque part" (86), là où "naissance et mort se mêlent" (Grossman, 47). Comment donc ne pas commencer aujourd'hui par la fin lorsque "c'est en finissant qu'il commença" (Beckett 1951a, 53)?

Le rapport – ou en l'occurrence l'ambivalence de ce rapport – entre finir et mourir se trouve dès le début de *Malone meurt* lorsque 'finir' est 'ne pas finir,' car en 'finissant' on ne 'finit' pas: "Peut-être

que je n'aurai pas le temps de finir. D'un autre côté, je finirai peut-être trop tôt. Me voilà à nouveau dans mes vieilles apories" (10). Par là, la tension vers la fin s'inscrit au cœur même du dialogue entre possibilité et/ou impossibilité, dessinant le vacillement qui hante le 'finir' beckettien dans son rapport à la mort, à la perte, mais aussi et indissociablement à l'écriture dans les 'vieilles apories.' Ces apories de Malone, mais aussi celles de l'Innommable, feront l'objet de cette réflexion car une certaine pensée de l'aporie demeure, explicitement ou implicitement, tout au long de l'œuvre beckettienne.

Le mot 'aporie' nous vient du grec *aporia*, *a-poros*, littéralement le 'sans passage,' "et le terme s'applique d'abord à ces lieux difficiles à traverser, ou même infranchissables, par exemple les mers et les océans" (Gasché, 107). Dans son acception la plus courante, l'aporie désigne 'l'impasse,' le chemin théorique barré, c'est pourquoi, dans la philosophie, l'aporie des modernes s'identifie à une difficulté logique insurmontable. Toutefois, comme le montre Rodolphe Gasché, le statut de l'aporie ne saurait se réduire, chez les Grecs, à une simple 'impasse' ou chemin barré, car confronté à l'*aporia* on doit trouver un *poros*, soit "un chemin pour sortir de la situation difficile et intolérable. Et pourtant, un *poros* n'est pas n'importe quel chemin" (107).

Et c'est exactement "ce vieux terme grec et usé jusqu'à la corde, ce mot fatigué de philosophie et de logique" (Derrida 1996, 32) qui désigne chez Platon l'arrêt nécessaire du raisonnement philosophique "engagé sur le chemin de la vérité"; chez Aristote, la méthode de recherche qui part des opinions contraires; et "la seule issue possible de tout effort philosophique" chez les sceptiques grecs (Gasché, 108). Comment, dans cet éventail d'apories peut-on lire les apories que Beckett a comprises et a compromises de *Malone meurt* à *L'innommable*? D'emblée, si confronté à *l'aporia* on devait trouver un *poros*, c'est-à-dire percer une voie, une route qui n'existe pas, c'est là que l'on reconnaîtrait, grâce à sa singularité, l'originalité de l'œuvre beckettienne.

Or dans ce texte, je me contenterai de rappeler deux apories qui ont un fort écho avec les apories beckettiennes: la première, celle que Heidegger considère comme 'élémentaire' et dont provient la *sophia* du *Dasein*; la seconde, l'aporie 'fondatrice' que Derrida met en évidence dans sa lecture d'*Être et temps* (1927). Car c'est à travers ces deux apories, inévitablement liées entre elles, qu'on peut 'commencer,' me semble-t-il, à élucider la puissante portée des apories beckettiennes.

Lorsque Heidegger écrit sur le *Sophiste* de Platon, il rappelle qu'Aristote, en se référant à la *sophia,* avait écrit: "Apercevoir une difficulté et s'étonner, c'est reconnaître sa propre ignorance" (cité dans Gasché, 112). Or puisque cet étonnement (au sens de *thaumazein*) consiste d'abord en reconnaître que quelque chose ne 'marche' pas, Heidegger note qu'Aristote recourt au terme *aporein. Aporia*, dit alors Heidegger, signifie que "la considération [la contemplation] du monde ne passe pas, ne trouve aucun chemin" (2001, 125). Pour le philosophe, *aporein* et *diaporein* impliquent une volonté de passer au travers: "celui qui prolonge l'*aporein* et le *diaporein*, et essaie de passer, révèle un effort pour fuir l'*agnoia* [l'ignorance], l'incertitude, le recouvrement, pour chercher l'*epistasthai* [la connaissance], le savoir" (Heidegger 2001, 126). C'est ainsi que l'aporie décrit ici la situation où "le *Dasein* prend conscience de son ignorance […], mais il s'agit aussi d'un moment où cette conscience de ne pas connaître l'issue déclenche une volonté de passer au travers" (Gasché, 113).

Ainsi la *sophia* du *Dasein* ou, pour en faire une transposition, la sagesse humaine provient de cet 'étonnement aporétique,' de cette expérience qui perturbe la compréhension et qui conduit, tout d'abord, à reconnaître sa propre ignorance. Or lorsque Gasché rappelle que l'aporie heideggérienne est un état intermédiaire qu'il faudrait surmonter, je voudrais m'arrêter un instant sur l'aporie comme ce moment ou cette expérience qui mène à la reconnaissance de sa propre ignorance, afin d'envisager la résonance qu'elle peut trouver chez Beckett.

Comme tant d'autres personnages beckettiens, l'Innommable avoue à plusieurs reprises sa propre ignorance, mais à la différence de tant d'autres, il relie ce non-savoir à la pratique de l'aporie: "que dois-je faire dans la situation où je suis, comment procéder? Par pure aporie ou bien par affirmations et négations infirmées au fur et à mesure, ou tôt ou tard." [...] "À remarquer, avant d'aller plus loin, de l'avant, que je dis aporie sans savoir ce que ça veut dire" (7-8). Outre la démarche discursive de l'Innommable qui se présente explicitement comme aporétique, on peut accorder que, en reconnaissant le lien entre aporie et ignorance, l'Innommable performe l'affirmation beckettienne "Je travaille avec l'impuissance, l'ignorance" (cité dans Boxall, 96). Or, comment peut-on interpréter cette ignorance par rapport à quelqu'un qui multiplie des références textuelles et intratextuelles, parfois si savantes et innombrables, provenant tant de la littérature que de la psychanalyse, la théologie, la philosophie…? De quelle ignorance s'agit-il?

Tandis que cette impuissance est reconduite par la critique vers la problématique du langage et plus spécifiquement du silence beckettien (Boxall, 96-97), l'ignorance peut être envisagée dans son rapport à l'aporie heideggérienne qui lie ainsi l'étonnement aporétique ou l'ébranlement qui perturbe la compréhension, à la reconnaissance de la propre ignorance: "Moi-même, à condition d'y réfléchir, je l'ignorerais" avoue Molloy (11) sur le besoin de craindre de B, lorsque l'ignorance envahit tant le narrateur que son personnage. Ainsi, loin de fuir l'ignorance, les personnages beckettiens semblent s'apprêter à s'en tenir à elle – en ignorant ironiquement leur propre ignorance – à rester dans l'aporie, ou à la prolonger dans une sorte d'exposition et de répétition de l'ignorance: "Mais est-ce là des apories, des vraies? Je ne sais pas," dit également Malone (10) avant d'ajouter plus loin: "D'ailleurs peu importe que je sois né ou non, que j'aie vécu ou non, que je sois mort ou seulement mourant, je ferai comme j'ai toujours fait, dans l'ignorance de ce que je fais, de qui je suis, d'où je suis, de si je suis" (85). Et l'on pourrait se demander ici ce que signifie 'rester dans l'aporie' et surtout, rester dans l'aporie du 'finir' de Malone car, on ne peut certes pas envisager l'ignorance chez Beckett comme un simple défaut de connaissance, tout comme on ne peut pas penser ses apories dans la simple et classique négation du chemin.

On peut donc voir que, même si les personnages beckettiens ne cherchent pas à poursuivre la connaissance (*epistemé*) ou la vérité (*aletheia*) à travers l'aporie, comme le *Dasein* heideggérien devrait le faire, on retrouve des résonances heideggériennes chez Beckett dans ce lien établi entre aporie et ignorance, qui semble habiter et Malone et l'Innommable de façon très particulière. Tant et si bien que lorsque le premier se demande s'il n'aurait pas le temps de finir ou s'il finira trop tôt, il ignore quel sera son dernier mot écrit (124), tout autant que le moment précis de sa propre mort. Dans ce sens, le 'finir' de Malone qui se rapporte explicitement à l'anticipation de la mort dès la première ligne lorsqu'il écrit: "Je serai quand même bientôt tout à fait mort enfin," ce 'finir' qui entraîne également une spéculation sur le moment de la propre mort: "Peut-être le mois prochain," toutefois, "Il se peut que je me trompe" (7), ce 'finir' donc de Malone et ce personnage "vivant de cette vie finissante" (86), se rapproche à nouveau de Heidegger pour lequel le *Dasein* "existe comme être-en-vue-de-la-mort" (Dastur, 57) et "avec la certitude de la mort se concilie l'indétermination de son quand" (Heidegger 1927, §52).

Sans pouvoir évidemment entrer ici dans le détail de l'analyse heideggérienne de *Être et temps*, je vais tout d'abord me borner à signaler quelques réflexions sur les paragraphes 45 à 51 qui font résonner autrement le second livre de la trilogie.

Le rapport aporétique qu'entretiennent 'finir' et 'mourir' chez Beckett trouve un fort écho là où Heidegger élabore et thématise les trois figures ou modes de finir: mourir, périr et décéder. Tandis que 'périr' représente la sortie du monde du vivant et 'décéder' se rapporte plutôt aux études biologico-médicales, c'est le verbe 'mourir' – ou proprement mourir – que Heidegger réserve pour l'interprétation existentiale[1] de la mort. D'ailleurs, le philosophe fait aussi une distinction entre la mort comme 'fin' et la maturité comme 'fin' afin de distinguer la mort du *Dasein* des autres fins et des autres limites.[2] C'est ainsi qu'à la différence des animaux et des végétaux, seul le *Dasein* – ou l'être humain – a un "rapport à la mort *comme telle*" (1927, §46; souligné dans le texte). En dépit de la délimitation complexe que Heidegger établit autour du terme 'finir,' ce qui me semble important à retenir ici ce sont les différentes expositions de 'finir.' Alors que pour Heidegger le *Dasein* "peut même finir sans à proprement parler mourir, et [...] en *tant que tel* [il] ne périt jamais *simplement* (§49; souligné dans le texte),[3] Malone pour sa part écrit non sans ironie: "Peut-être que je n'aurai pas le temps de finir. D'un autre côté, je finirai peut-être trop tôt," en ajoutant: "Que je ne finisse pas, ça n'a pas d'importance. Mais si je devais finir trop tôt? Pas d'importance non plus" (10). Alors que la phrase de Heidegger fait sens grâce à la délimitation de 'finir,' celle de Beckett étale l'indécidabilité de 'finir' tout en effaçant les limites de cette expérience. Dès lors si dans *Malone meurt* tous les cochons "s'évanouissant à peu près de la même façon" (44) mais différemment des agneaux ou des chevreaux, si les mulets peuvent crever mais aussi mourir, et même si l'ennui est mortel, on pourrait dire que le narrateur est loin de respecter la délimitation de l'analytique existentiale. Néanmoins, la chose à remarquer est précisément le jeu déployé par Malone autour de 'finir': "J'ai dû réfléchir pendant la nuit à mon emploi du temps. Je pense que je pourrai me raconter quatre histoires [...]. Peut-être que je n'aurai pas le temps de finir " (10). Ainsi, l'ambivalence du 'peut-être,' si présente chez Beckett, déclenche le rapport entre la possibilité et/ou l'impossibilité d'achever de raconter ses histoires, et la possibilité et/ou l'impossibilité soit de finir, soit de mourir, en rapprochant l'écriture de la mort – et vice-versa – tout en reconnaissant l'aporie qu'une telle contamination provoque.

Par ailleurs, on sait que pour Heidegger le *Dasein* ne peut exister de manière 'authentique' que par rapport à sa propre mort, mais sa mort appartient à l'excédent qui ne lui est pas 'encore disponible' car s'il n'a pas d'excédent, le *Dasein* "est ainsi devenu un ne-plus-être-Là" (§46-49). Ainsi, la mort représente la possibilité, c'est-à-dire le pouvoir de 'ne-plus-être-Là': "En tant que pouvoir-Être," écrit le philosophe, "le *Dasein* ne peut jamais dépasser la possibilité de la mort. La mort est la possibilité de la pure et simple impossibilité du *Dasein*" (§50).[4]

Or la vieille idée philosophique de ne pas pouvoir vivre sa propre mort était évoquée chez Beckett dans *Eleutheria* dès les années quarante: "Si j'étais mort, dit Victor, je ne saurais pas que je suis mort. C'est la seule chose que j'ai contre la mort" (149); vieille 'impossibilité' donc qui revient lorsque Malone avoue: "Je ne me regarderai pas mourir, ça fausserait tout" (8). En proférant cette phrase, le personnage avoue qu'il n'a pas la possibilité de faire l'expérience du passage à la mort en se regardant en même temps, et ça 'fausserait' tout car "atteindre sa totalité dans la mort, pour le *Dasein*, dit Heidegger, c'est en même temps perdre l'être du Là. Le passage au ne-plus-être-Là ôte justement au *Dasein* la possibilité d'expérimenter ce passage et de le comprendre en tant qu'il l'expérimente" (§47). Si Malone 'traversait' donc, s'il pouvait se regarder mourir, il ne serait plus là.

D'ailleurs, lorsque le personnage met en rapport l'écriture et la mort, le 'peut-être' beckettien, "le suprême peut-être" (1953, 44) qui ouvre la fin à la possibilité de l'impossibilité comporte donc un temps "créateur, force d'innovation et d'inconnu" (Malabou, 68). Dès que Malone rapproche l'écriture de la mort, dès qu'il rend indécidable le sens de finir, soit comme mourir soit comme l'achèvement ou accomplissement de ses histoires, il ouvre, à travers son 'jeu,' cette 'impossibilité' de vivre la propre mort à la 'possibilité' de l'écriture. Mais en même temps, il semble ouvrir aussi la possibilité d'écrire à 'l'impossibilité' de vivre la propre mort. Comment donc discerner les apories de Malone qui vont de l'écriture à la mort (et vice versa) en engageant le concept de finir?

Tout d'abord, on pourrait reconnaître ici la trace de la première aporie esquissée plus haut, soit l'aporie comme le moment où l'on admettra sa propre ignorance par rapport à sa propre mort. Cependant on peut également reconnaître la tension provoquée par le danger: tandis que le jeu autour de finir permet à Malone de se rapprocher à travers l'écriture de sa propre mort – et à la mort en général – il risque

aussi d'anéantir 'trop tôt' toute possibilité dès qu'il peut finir, c'est-à-dire mourir.

D'emblée, il faut noter une très forte coïncidence entre cette aporie et l'aporie que Derrida relève souligne lorsqu'il montre la façon dont la "*fin menace et rend possible* l'analytique" existentiale chez Heidegger (1996, 129; je souligne). Dans son texte *Apories*, Derrida soutient qu'on ne peut pas assurer les frontières en parlant de la mort, et il insiste sur le fait que la délimitation chez Heidegger entre la mort du *Dasein* et les autres formes de finir devient problématique dès qu'il établit une hiérarchie sur les modes de finir avec commencement et fin. En outre, lorsque Heidegger dit que le discours psychologique de la mort, pour donner un autre exemple, ne pourrait jamais être un discours sur le mourir, car c'est une hypothèse du mourant (§49), c'est-à-dire du vivant, Derrida montre que le discours heideggérien se retourne contre sa propre analytique dès que "le *Dasein* ne peut pas davantage *témoigner* de la mort; c'est aussi en tant que vivant ou mourant – mourant *demeurant* en vie – qu'il atteste l'être-pour-la-mort" (1996, 96; souligné dans le texte).

Si la mort propre et authentique du *Dasein* était assurée par la délimitation que Heidegger avait établie, l'expérience aporétique derridienne montre que ces limites "ne prennent forme que lorsqu'elles s'effacent" (Gasché, 121). Ainsi au lieu de trouver une solution à l'aporie de la mort, autrement dit, au lieu d'opposer un temps authentique au temps vulgaire pour trouver une solution à l'aporie de la mort, comme Heidegger l'avait fait, Derrida se livre à l'endurance de l'aporie, à faire une "expérience interminable" (1996, 37), de telle sorte qu'elle devient une manière d'éviter la conscience assurée, et relève du passage et du non-passage – surtout le passage de la mort, au-delà de la mort. Or ici on peut voir la résonance entre la phrase de l'Innommable: "Ce qu'il faut éviter, je ne sais pourquoi, c'est l'esprit de système" (9), et celle de Derrida: "c'est qu'il faut éviter à tout prix la bonne conscience" (1996, 42). Et encore cette idée "d'éviter à tout prix [...] la forme assurée de la conscience de soi" (1996, 42), distinction qu'il est impossible de nier dans ces mots de l'Innommable: "J'ai l'air de parler, ce n'est pas moi, de moi, ce n'est pas de moi" (7). Il s'agit donc chez Derrida de l'aporétique de la frontière, bien qu'il admette, en se rapprochant d'une certaine manière des personnages beckettiens, qu'il traite l'aporie sans bien savoir où aller "sauf qu'en ce mot il devrait y aller du 'ne pas savoir où aller'" (1996, 31), vu que, comme dit Molloy, dès "qu'on sait où l'on va [...]. Ça vous enlève presque l'envie d'y

aller" (24). Or, puisque ce 'ne pas savoir où aller' est une constante chez Beckett, on pourrait alors dire que ses personnages sont chaque fois remis à leurs apories dès qu'on lit "Birth was the death of him" (1990, 425) que l'écrivain traduit par "Sa naissance fut sa perte"; en ouvrant à nouveau le jeu autour du mot mourir, il fait référence à la façon dont ses personnages se trouvent constamment perdus. Perdus donc depuis toujours dans ses apories.

     Outre cette analogie qui se dessine entre Beckett et Derrida dans l'expérience ou l'endurance de l'aporie, Derrida signale que "le syntagme 'ma mort'" rapporte 'le possible à l'impossible': d'un côté, "'Ma mort' entre guillemets, ce n'est pas forcément la mienne, c'est une expression que n'importe qui peut s'approprier" (1996, 48-51); de l'autre, la mort de chacun est irremplaçable, "personne ne peut mourir à ma place ou à la place de l'autre [...]. Rien n'est plus substituable et rien ne l'est moins que le syntagme 'ma mort' "(1996, 49). Il faut signaler que c'est justement le sujet de la mort que Derrida avait choisi dans *La voix et le phénomène* pour suggérer que dans tout 'je suis,' un 'je suis mort' est impliqué. Par là Derrida conjugue – entre autres choses – une des idées principales de sa pensée, à savoir que "le langage est bien le médium de ce jeu de la présence et de l'absence" (1967, 9) propre de la structure de répétition du signe. En ce sens, face à la question de savoir si Malone meurt ou ne meurt pas, Cristopher Ricks répond: "In a first person narrative, you can never be sure" (Dans un récit à la première personne, cela reste toujours incertain; 115), et il soutient, "Beckett cannot posit Dasein, since the creative act is always mediated. Words are no longer directly referential: they are at once 'there' and 'not there'" (Beckett ne peut pas pas postuler le *Dasein*, puisque l'acte créateur est toujours médiatisé. Les mots ne sont plus directement référentiels: ils sont en même temps "là" et "pas là"; 35; je traduis), autrement dit, ils sont à la fois présents et absents. Ainsi, on retrouve une autre analogie qui concerne Beckett dès que Derrida rapproche l'écriture de la mort. D'une tout autre manière, là encore ne cessent de se tisser des liens entre les apories beckettiennes et derridiennes, qui, par ailleurs, portent la trace heideggérienne. Des apories donc qui, tout en nous rappelant ces coïncidences, soulignent en même temps leurs différences.

     Alors que Beckett lie l'aporie à la possibilité de l'écriture, Derrida rapporte "l'aporie à la possibilité de la pensée" (Gasché, 116), et la problématique des frontières, qui demeure dans ces deux apories, s'entend aussi dans la limite qui écarte et rapproche la pensée

philosophique et la 'pensée littéraire.' Car il est vrai, comme le dit Gasché, que l'aporie fondatrice que Derrida trouve au cœur d'*Être et temps* "ne nous délivre pas de la tâche de penser son essence singulière. Sans répit, et sans espoir de jamais trouver dans ce questionnement quelque repos que ce soit, la pensée doit en poursuivre la tâche" (121), on peut y retracer un rapport de parenté lorsque Malone évoque ainsi la pensée: "C'est là où je meurs, à l'insu de ma chair stupide. Ce qu'on voit, ce qui crie et s'agite, ce sont les restes. [...] Quelque part dans cette confusion la pensée s'acharne, loin du compte elle aussi. Elle aussi me cherche, comme depuis toujours, là où je ne suis pas. Elle non plus ne sait pas se calmer. J'en ai assez. Qu'elle passe sur d'autres sa rage d'agonisante" (19). En ce sens, le déplacement de l'angoisse de mort au jeu créatif ne prend donc pas chez Beckett une direction unilatérale, tant et si bien que la 'contamination' rend aussi la frontière opaque entre une angoisse créative et une créativité angoissante ou, pour le dire autrement, entre l'agonie de la mort et l'agonie d'écrire: "Voici en tout cas [...] la fin du programme" dit Malone, "visite, diverses remarques, suite Macmann, rappels de l'agonie, suite Macmann, puis mélange Macmann et agonie aussi longtemps que possible" (158). Entre ces agonies ou luttes, les apories comme fin, mort, perte, limite, ignorance, contradiction, traversée ou expérience, esquissent une pensée qui ne pourra être ni simplement littéraire, ni purement philosophique.

Pour 'finir,' on peut dire que les apories beckettiennes et derridiennes ne sont pas simplement négatives, fermées, pas plus qu'elles ne luttent inlassablement pour éviter un système rassurant, statique, fixe, clos sur lui-même. Grâce aux apories, un mouvement fort et continu qui est loin de paralyser ces forces d'écritures s'inscrit chez Beckett en ouvrant le jeu aporétique de l'écriture comme expérience de la littérature, comme forme d'expression, comme écriture qui suit et déploie 'la trace de l'aporie.' Loin de produire des 'contradictions performatives,' de la simple paralysie ou une absence de chemin, les apories beckettiennes sont une exploration incessante – toujours en jeu dans la littérature – de la pertinence de l'aporie dans l'exercice même de l'écriture.

Notes

1.   Jean-Marie Vaysse définit ainsi le mot 'existential' dans *Le vocabulaire de Heidegger* (25):

> Existential qualifie l'analytique de l'existentialité de l'existence du *Dasein* dont les structures se nomment des existentiaux. Existentiel qualifie la compréhension que le *Dasein* a de lui-même. Il convient donc de distinguer clairement le plan ontologique de l'existential, concernant l'être de l'existence, les déterminations de cet étant qu'est le *Dasein*, et le plan ontique de l'existentiel concernant cet étant en son existence concrète. La confusion du niveau ontologique de l'existential et du niveau ontique de l'existentiel a donné lieu à l'existentialisme (au sens de Sartre).

2.   "Qu'on l'entende comme achèvement ou accomplissement, la maturité finale […] de l'organisme biologique est une limite, une fin […] que le *Dasein* est toujours en situation de dépasser […] Cette maturité, il peut l'avoir dépassée avant la fin" (Derrida 1996, 56).

3.   S'il est vrai que le *Dasein,* écrit Heidegger, "[…] peut même finir sans à proprement parler mourir, et s'il est vrai, d'un autre côté, que le *Dasein* en tant que tel ne périt jamais simplement, nous caractériserons ce phénomène intermédiaire par le terme de *décéder*, le verbe *mourir* étant au contraire réservé à la *guise d'être* en laquelle le *Dasein est pour* sa mort" (§49; souligné dans le texte).

4.   "C'est pourquoi enfin la formule heideggérienne 'la mort est la possibilité de l'impossibilité' est admirablement précise et ne doit pas être confondue avec celle qui pose la mort comme l'impossibilité de la possibilité. La première pose le néant comme assurant le pouvoir de l'homme, l'autre comme heurtant simplement la liberté humaine" (Levinas, 104).

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